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A Nietzschean Approach to Key Islamic Paradigms

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2003

Abstract

For more than a thousand years, Islam has been the hostile 'other' of the West. Not only does the West feel threatened by Islam, but also many Muslims feel threatened by the West. The dialectical relationship between Islam and the West has gained a new impetus since the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in Manhattan on September 11th, 2001. A central issue in this dialectic is what is perceived and understood by 'Islam' by both Muslims themselves and by non-Muslims. Whilst conflict may suggest support for Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilisations' thesis, with Islam as the prime candidate for this clash, this thesis will aim to show that such a clash is a consequence of only one of many understandings of Islamic identity.

Islam and the West, it will be argued, are not as incompatible in a civilisational or ideological context as history might suggest. Compatibility can be better appreciated by examining what are regarded by Muslims as key paradigms that make up Islamic identity: that of the Qur'an, Muhammad, Medina as the first 'Islamic state', and the four 'rightly-guided' (*rashidun*) caliphs. To be Muslim is to accept certain archetypes as central to belief. This is not what is in contention. However, what is a matter of contention is how one *approaches* these paradigms, particularly amongst such renowned Islamic revivalist scholars as Mawlana Mawdudi, Muhammad Iqbal, Sayyid Qutb, and Jamal al-Din Afghani. This thesis argues that the approach has been dominated by what is termed the 'Transhistorical': mythologizing the paradigms to the extent that they have become 'idols' which its adherents are unwilling to question or even, if necessary, to shatter. The Muslim philosopher Mawlana Mawdudi will be represented as symbolising this Transhistorical approach.

However, another approach can be usefully adopted, that of the Historical, that perceives the paradigms within the context of time and place, thus allowing for flexibility of constant renewal and reassessment. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche can be helpfully employed in examining the Historical approach. Whilst Nietzsche rarely spoke specifically about Islam, his admiration for it as a religion is in sharp contrast to his criticism of Christianity. Whilst Nietzsche was addressing an audience of a different culture and age, this thesis aims to show that his philosophy can make an important contribution to the dialectical understanding between Islam and the West. 'Returning' to Islam in what is perceived as its Golden Age is nothing original nor would be seen by Islamists as unorthodox. However, Nietzsche's own originality, creativity, and psychological, philological and historical insights allow for a fresh and enlightening approach to key Islamic paradigms that show that Islam and the West are quite capable of ideological and civilisational reconciliation.

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Chapter One

The Clash of Civilisations: Background to the Debate and Thesis Outlined

"The West as a concept of civilisation has seen its centre of gravity move from Western Europe to America to Eastern Europe. Israel represents the projection of this centre into the East to wipe out its specific character, its spiritual wealth, and humankind's hope for a new renaissance."[1]

1. The Clash of Civilisations Thesis

The above quote by the exiled leader of the Islamist movement in Tunisia, Rashid Ghannushi, is typical of a concern amongst many Muslims that there is a growing civilisational conflict between Islam and the West. Rather than being presented with the theological view of Islam as a member of the same family as the Judaeo-Christian tradition, we have conflict and difference. Such a perception, of course, does not lie only with Islamist commentators, but many Western writers are just as guilty, if not more so, of portraying Islam as an 'Other'.

Edward Said's well-known study, *Orientalism*[2], has recounted how images of the Other have often been created to confirm one's own sense of racial and cultural superiority, or to provide justification for the conquest and abuse of other people's territory. From the eighteenth century, when the West was at its economic and military apex, Islam was perceived as, not a threat, but as decadent, irrational, inefficient, lazy, barbaric, false and Satanic. Therefore, the Others became 'objects' that were defined not by their own discourses, but by a discourse imposed upon them by the West. The results, of course, were a grossly biased view of Islam that still continues to reverberate in contemporary discourse. Said's

[1] From a speech, in Hunter (1998) p.13
[2] Said (1978)

later study, *Covering Islam*,[1] provides an incisive account of Western media treatment of Muslims and Islam following the Iran hostage crisis of 1979-80 and it is certainly still not too difficult to detect similar media treatment in the Western press of the twenty-first century. Said's contribution is important for any study of contemporary Islam for it warns us to be wary of making quick judgements within the context of our own Wittgensteinian 'language game', as, in the past, much Western understanding of Islam "has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world."[2] However, although Said's concept of Orientalism is more important than a "straw man" invented to be knocked down[3], there is some justification in Albert Hourani's criticism that Said constructed an "ideal type of Orientalist" and "ideal types must be used with care."[4] We can, in fact, learn much from Western scholars of Islam from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Albert Hourani noted:

"There is...running through the work of the great [Western] Islamic scholars one central strand of concern...which attempted to articulate what Muslims believed to be the revelation given to mankind through the Prophet Muhammad: tradition, law, theology, mystical thought. A hundred years of study of these matters have produced a body of work which cannot be regarded as badly done."[5]

Charles Lindholm rightly states that:

"Contemporary Western enmity...is not simply a consequence of modern conflict. It is a reflection of the thousand-year rivalry between the Muslim Middle East and Christian Europe for economic, political and religious hegemony over the Western hemisphere and beyond – a contest dominated until recently by Islam".[6]

Initially, through the encounters of the Crusades, Western reaction to Islam was a fear of a Muslim invasion and a return to the days when Islam spread as far as Spain and southern France. The Ottoman challenge that, in 1529, led to Suleiman's army at the gates of Vienna, was a genuine concern and fear for the world of Christendom, and this was reflected in the Western literature at the time.

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[1] Said (1978)
[2] Said (1981) p.12
[3] Lewis (1982)
[4] Hourani (1979) p.29
[5] *ibid*
[6] Lindholm (1996) p. 3

Norman Daniel has treated the subject of these Christian perceptions in detail in his book *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*[1]. Daniel shows how popular themes that are still with us today first emerged. For example, accusations of Muhammad instigating revelation to justify sexual indulgence; or that "Muhammad had made up his doctrines from the Old and New Testaments on the advice of an Arian monk who instructed him"[2] and, therefore, Muhammad's claim that he had received divine revelation was spurious. In Daniel's earlier book, *The Arabs and Medieval Europe*, he notes that in medieval Christian accounts of the Prophet, "he was subjected to gross abuse which, however shocking in itself, we must understand as rooted in folklore. The Qur'an was seen as the product of the events of the life of the Prophet, rather as a deliberate contrivance than as God's revelation, in response to particular needs."[3] Although modern Western scholarship no longer engages in such fanciful stereotypes, the roots of medieval folklore have survived in the Western psyche; most notably in popular literature, 'best-sellers', and journalistic pieces, as Said's *Covering Islam* illustrates.

A series of events in the seventeenth century, however, proved to be important turning points in the Western view of Islam. In 1606 the Sultan deigned to treat a European power as an equal by signing a treaty with the Hapsburgs that ended a costly 150-year stalemate on the Danube. In 1683, a quarter of a million Ottoman soldiers besieged Vienna, but the over-confidence and slowness of the Turkish general to press a military advantage allowed the Christians to prepare and gather resources, resulting in the besieging army being routed and chased down the Danube all the way to Belgrade. The sixteen years of war that followed were a series of military disasters for the Ottomans, and at the treaty of Karlowitz, signed in 1699:

"The empire which barely a generation earlier had challenged Vienna lost half its European dominions at a stroke; and what perhaps was worse, her cover was

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[1] Daniel (1993)
[2] Daniel (1993) p.14
[3] Daniel (1979) p.234 A briefer account, complementary to Daniel's, is R.W. Southern's *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (1962)

blown, her weakness revealed, and her importance, in the world's eyes, was now almost wholly diplomatic."[1]

Until the nineteenth century, the military (as distinct from the commercial) advance of the West into the Islamic world was limited to the areas of the Balkans and along the northern and eastern shores of the Black Sea. The further turning point came with the occupation of Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1798: "the first armed inroad of Europe on the Arab near East since the Crusades."[2] The event is significant in that it began the period of Western intervention in the Islamic world and completely shattered any remaining illusions of the superiority of Islam:

> "The great Ottoman Empire, which had aspired to convert the world to Islam, now was obliged to look to the West for inspiration; instead of being Europe's nemesis, it soon would be its 'sick man'"[3]

The psychological impact for the Muslim world of such a decline cannot be overestimated and must be a factor in the residual collective memory of the contemporary Islamic world; especially considering the confidence, wealth, efficiency and technology that the Ottoman Empire possessed compared with the frightened, fragmented and superstitious Europe. Further, the seeming 'natural' triumph of the West over Islam must contribute to the justification of Orientalism as a concept. It is not surprising, therefore, that Islam refers to its own Golden Age as its justification for the 'natural triumph' of Islam over *Jahiliyya*; the unbelievers. The fact that Islam has suffered under the Western dominance also, for many, brings into question the validity of Islam as superior to other civilisations and ideologies. This collective memory on both sides (the Muslims versus the Christians) continues to be evident in contemporary events; most recently following the events of September 11th, 2001 with the attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. Similarly the concern that Islamic 'fundamentalism' is a threat has its basis in the fear that was prevalent in Western Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

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[1] Goodwin (1999) p.236
[2] Lewis (1993) p. 183
[3] Lindholm (1996) p.4

Since Islam was perceived as a threat as a threat by the West, the Muslim empires have been depicted as vast tyrannies, compared with an enlightened, liberal Europe. As Hegel famously wrote in *Reason in History*, "the Orientals knew only that *one* is free, the Greeks and Romans that *some* are free, while we know that *all* men absolutely, that is, as men, are free."[1] As the fear of Islam receded to be replaced by patronage, Western commentators, such as Max Weber, perceived the Islamic nations as arbitrary, personalised kingships with inefficient and corrupt bureaucracies. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan was conceived as lacking any kind of moral purpose, other than the pursuit and retention of power. Authority was cruel, inefficient and irrational and based purely upon the ability of the leader to coerce.[2] Again, such a concept of Islamic rule persists to this day in the incarnation of such figures as Saddam Hussain. The picture that is painted is that of the tyrant whose sole purpose is the acquisition and retention of power merely for power itself. This is contrasted sharply with the Western democratic ideal. The question is rarely raised as to how it is possible for a ruler to retain this power for such long periods of time, despite the historical evidence weighted against the likelihood of being able to retain power based on force alone.

The rhetoric against the Muslims could fill thousands of pages, but it is sufficient here to cite some of the renowned remarks of Lord Cromer, who was the British consul-general of Egypt from 1882 to 1907. It is typical of the confident conqueror who, despite living and researching amongst a people for fifteen years, still succeeded in presenting a complacent and disparaging picture of the conquered. In his hefty work *Modern Egypt*, he notes: "the want of mental symmetry and precision...is the chief distinguishing feature between the illogical and picturesque East and the logical West"[3], and further he states that "somehow or other the Oriental generally acts, speaks and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European."[4]

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[1] Hegel (1953) p. 24
[2] Weber (1978) pp. 625-7 & 976-8
[3] Baring (1908) Vol 1., p. 7
[4] *ibid.*, Vol 2, p.164

The turning point in terms of perceiving Islam was the 1979 Iranian revolution, demonstrating just how politically motivated Islam can be. For the secularising West, a 'good religion' is one that keeps itself pretty much separate from political concerns, a 'bad religion' is one that is politically motivated. Islam encroaching upon politics is perceived as theocratic and, by implication, totalitarian, xenophobic, backward, and illiberal. The Iranian revolution has resulted in Shi'a Islam being labelled 'bad Islam' as opposed to what is perceived as the more democratic Sunni. Partly this is due to the presence of a powerful clergy in Shi'a, whereas Sunni Islam does not have such a prevailing religious body. Theoretically, Shi'a political theory is not as totalitarian and anti-democratic as the West might conceive and, historically, many examples of anti-democratic Islamist movements in Sunni countries can be provided. Therefore, Islamic extremism – represented by Shi'a Islam – is regarded as an aberration of orthodox, mainstream Islam, as represented by Sunni Islam.

One might suppose, therefore, that the West would be more prone to work with Sunni Muslims than with what are perceived as radical Shi'a Muslims. Of course, this has not been the case in the past. The West had a very close, long-standing relationship with Iran before the revolution and other examples of Muslim countries that certainly are not within the mainstream can be cited; Saudi Arabia[1] comes to mind. In terms of the West's relationship with Muslim countries it seems to come down to talking to those countries that have power, and those that do not are seen as 'anti-Western'; regardless of ideology. As Hunter points out:

"..the underlying but largely unspoken and unacknowledged cause of the dichotomy between Islam and the West is the question of power and the consequences of its exercise – that is, influence at the regional and global levels."[2]

Consequently, the West may not be so concerned with Islamic revivalism *as such*, but rather the effect it may have on the power balance. Many Islamic countries are both strategically important and economically, especially in terms of oil. Appeal to ideology might be used as a blanket for more materialistic concerns:

[1] The Wahhabis may see themselves as the 'true Islam' and, therefore, orthodox, but much of the Sunni world, rightly or wrongly, would regard them as an aberration.
[2] Hunter (1998) p.19

"Western leaders justified the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91 on the basis of punishing aggression and restoring democracy to Kuwait rather than securing Arabian oil fields."[1] Thus, much of the language that comes from the West referring to Islam – especially the 'political' kind – as a threat is nothing more than rhetoric. As Graham Fuller wrote in 1995, "a civilisational clash is not so much over Jesus Christ, Confucius, or the Prophet Muhammad as it is over the unequal distribution of world power, wealth, and influence."[2] Therefore, in examining the extent to which Islam is an ideological Other – or at least perceived as such – we must also take account of the use of power, its use in terms of legitimisation, and the function of the belief system as an instrument for that legitimisation. Ultimately, we are getting to the roots of how authority is perceived; by those subject to authority (the citizens of an Islamic state), those in authority (the rulers of an Islamic state), and those outside of that authority (non-Muslim – primarily 'Western' – ideologies).

It was the Persians who first conceived of the world as having a beginning: a cosmic battle between good and evil that will ultimately lead to the end of the world and the Day of Reckoning. Zoroastrianism was a huge influence on Judaism, Christianity and Islam, of course. For these religions, the end to this battle will be due to divine intervention. This denouement has not, of course, happened yet if you are a Christian, Jew or Muslim. However, in Francis Fukuyama's popular and controversial book *The End of History and the Last Man*[3], history has already come to an end with the triumph of Western liberal democracies. According to Fukuyama, other ideologies do still exist, of course, but they are no competition for the West and, indeed, it is up to the West to maintain a league of civilised nations to police these non-compliant nations until, eventually, they enter the global community of liberal democracy. Such a proud assumption occasionally takes a battering. With the decline of Communist power it is perhaps understandable that there exists a new-found confidence in Western superiority. However, other ideologies seem reluctant to enter the fold. The Iranian revolution of 1979 was a defining moment in this respect. Why, the West

[1] Hunter (1998) p.14
[2] Fuller (1995) p.150
[3] Fukuyama (1992)

wondered, would a wealthy materialist nation like Iran want to throw it all away and embrace what, in the eyes of many Western commentators, is a backward, totalitarian system of radical Islam?

A point needs to be made as to what the terms 'Western' or 'West' mean. Political scientist Samuel Huntingdon's well-known article in Foreign Affairs[1], for example, places Japan as 'West' and it is not uncommon to take a religion course in 'Western Religions', studying Judaism, Christianity and Islam (as opposed to 'Eastern Religions' of Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism). Although, generally, we might say that the USA and Western Europe are 'Western' we must wonder about, for example, Mexico or Turkey; and then we have such apparent anomalies as Australia and New Zealand. Therefore, it cannot be said that 'West' is merely a geographical term. Although, in the case of Turkey, the term 'one foot in the West and one foot in the East' may be taken as a geographical reference, what is also meant is *ideological.*

Likewise, one often speaks of 'Western ideology' and 'Western civilisation' (or Islamic ideology/civilisation) as if the two terms are synonymous. Certainly, Huntingdon's work suggests this. Thus we have 'Western civilisation', 'Islamic civilisation', 'Confucian civilisation' and so on.[2] However, this ignores the fact that within any one civilisation there are also cultural and ideological clashes. As already briefly noted, it is not so easy to speak of 'Western civilisation' as one all-encompassing term. When, for example, British Prime Minister Tony Blair spoke of Yugoslavia joining the "family of global nations"[3] he has in mind a particular ideological make-up of the family which is distinct from the reality of nations that are culturally and ethnically diverse, and yet are classed as belonging to 'Western civilisation'.

Clifford Geertz has pointed out the irony that the term ideology has itself become ideologised. At one time, the concept meant a rather loose collection of largely

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[1] Huntingdon (1993)

[2] Interestingly, Huntingdon foresees the Islamic and Confucian civilisations coalescing against the West

[3] Speech to the House of Commons on 8th June, 1999 with reference to the Kosovo Crisis

impractical, idealistic political proposals is now defined as, "the integrated assertions, theories and aims constituting a politico-social program, often with an implication of factitious propagandising; as Fascism was altered to fit the Nazi ideology."[1] Civilisation expresses itself outwardly through its culture. Thus, it could be argued that 'Western civilisation' and 'Western culture' are much the same thing. Geertz also defines culture as "a historically transmitted pattern of meaning embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and the attitudes towards life." Therefore, ideology is merely one aspect (though, quite possibly an important one) of a culture/civilisation. When we talk of Western culture/civilisation or Islamic culture/civilisation, we are referring to not only religion, but to art, politics, language, food, and so on. In this respect, it is perfectly possible, and often the case, for two separate elements within the same civilisation to conflict.

The idea, therefore, of a Western culture conflicting with an Islamic culture seems a rather superficial and largely false dichotomy. Within Islamic civilisation there are – and have been – conflicts of ideology and, it may well be, that two separate civilisations can communicate on the same ideological level better than two separate ideologies within the same civilisation. In considering the supposed Otherness of Islam, we must take account of the differing ideologies within Islam itself, plus the fact that it has, in the words of Kevin Avrush, been "caught up in the processes of social and cultural construction" which is part of "invented, reinvented and temporally shifting contingencies of material conditions and historic practice."[2]

Much of Western response to Islam is an instinctive desire for Western survival. Particularly, conservative intellectuals in America are concerned about what they see as a threat to Western culture, and, according to one such contributor to the debate, "the twenty-first century could once again find Islam at the gates of

[1] Webster's Dictionary
[2] Quoted in Rubinstein and Crocker (1994) p.118,119

Vienna, as immigrants or terrorists if not as armies."[1] And so, Europe has gone from a fear of the Islamic Other in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, to complacency and confidence in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, and now to a return to a fear once more as Europe itself suffers from a lack of the confidence that it once possessed, coupled with the decline in its economic and military supremacy. It is sufficient to summarise the decline of Western imperialism and the crisis of Western confidence in the words of Hans Kohn:

"the tendency of the colonial peoples to assert their national independence and equal rights is depriving imperialism first of its justification, and afterward of the possibility of survival. The cultural mission of the West as a basis of its dominance is no longer recognised in the East, and even in the West it is called in question by an increasing number of people."[2]

Hans Kohn was writing in the early 1930s with reference to Eastern nationalism. However, the same can be applied to more contemporary views of 'Western civilisation' in reference to Islamic states. The West, in reaction to what it perceives as a threat to its flagging self-confidence, reverts to an attack posture. Whereas the West is perceived as enlightened, rational and morally just, the 'East', the 'Third World' or 'Islamic ideology' (more specifically, the radical 'political form' of it) is an evil. Much contemporary discourse in the media is concerned with the topic of whether or not Islam can participate and contribute to the seeming globalisation of a variously defined liberal democratic code of living. In terms of international affairs, a distinction should, and, indeed, often is, made between Political Islam and Cultural Islam. The West has a number of good relationships with countries that have a Muslim population as its majority, and do not necessarily see religious belief and practice of a country as in any way relevant to political dialogue, provided Cultural Islam (encompassing, as it does, religious belief) is recognised by its believers as *separate from* the political arena. The question, however, is not whether the West may perceive a difference between cultural and political Islam but whether Islam *itself* can be understood in that way.

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[1] Lind (1991) p. 47
[2] Kohn (1932) p.21

Like the 'clash of civilisation' thesis, the attitude that Islam is inimical to liberalism can invoke an essentialist, ahistorical culturalism. Hunter, critical of essentialism, points out that: "Understanding Islam and analysing its relationships to other ideas and civilisations can be accomplished correctly only within *specific frames of time and space* [my italics]. Any other approach leads to incomplete and hence inaccurate generalities that would represent only one aspect of Islam, not its totality."[1] Hunter sees Islam as an ideology which has a full spectrum of symbols that can either point towards absolutism and hierarchy, or towards democracy and egalitarianism. Therefore, to say that Islam is inherently democratic has neither more nor less credence than to say that Islam is inherently autocratic. Hence the need to concentrate on a particular kind of Islam. Bearing this in mind, how then are we to make any assertions at all as to what Islam 'symbolises'? What, in other words, *particular kind of Islam* should be chosen as a study? What justification is there in choosing one kind of Islam over another?

Although attempting to determine an ideology in its totality is destined to result in a certain degree of vagueness and obscurity, it does not follow that it is therefore impossible to come to any conclusions concerning the essence of Islam. As will be demonstrated in this thesis, it can be asserted that Islam *does* have an essence, and that it is constructive to talk of Islam as being compatible with liberalism, democracy, globalisation, etc. Although it is indeed far more constructive to adopt the approach of studying Islam within specific frames of time and space, it is possible to go further and say that we can then reach general, viable and appropriate conclusions that apply to Islam as an ideology. Provided it is possible to show that there are common factors that exist amongst these different times and places, then it seems a rational approach to make conclusions as to what informs these common factors, and, therefore, show that there is such as thing as a 'totality', however general that may be.

We will examine a series of "specific frames of time and space", to quote Hunter, to see if there are common attributes that they all share, and attempt to show that we can talk of there existing a 'central core' to Islamic belief. The accusation

[1] Hunter (1998) p.17

may well be levelled that other "specific frames of time and space" can be found to prove the opposite; that Islam is, indeed, anti-democratic, irrational, autocratic etc. Scholars may cite, for example, Saudi Arabia as a particularly autocratic system and, therefore, conclude that Islam, at the very least, has autocratic *tendencies.* However, Saudi Arabia is not considered by the majority of Muslims as an ideal model of Islam; as a *paradigm*. What needs to be stressed is that Islam, as a religion, is a series of paradigms that govern belief and practice.

At issue here is the understanding of religion as ideology, and the distinction between the Utopic vision of Islam (as one, perfect, etc.) and Islam as is practised and engaged in by living, breathing human beings needs to be recognised. As Clifford Geertz has remarked, ideologies bridge "the emotional gap between things as they are and as one would have them to be, thus insuring the performance of roles that might otherwise be abandoned in despair or apathy."[1] Depending upon whether or not you are a realist or idealist, the use of ideology (as either not very important in determining state behaviour, or as the principal impulse) can be debated. Likewise, as a motivating factor, it varies from one Muslim nation to another. However, the ideology is nonetheless *there* as a motivating factor and, if a nation so chooses to pursue the goal of an Islamic state based upon the linked belief that that is what it means to be Islamic, then ideology becomes even more real, even more *here*, rather than *there*. To argue that Islam can be whatever you want it to be rather makes a mockery of the whole point of having Islam, of possessing a series of essential paradigms that inform roles and functions.

In the context of a thesis it is necessary to limit the field of study if it is to have any concerted focus. However, the reader may well be inclined to puzzle over the omissions. In particular, a study such as this could include a veritable plethora of material on the contributions of mediaeval Islamic philosophers, the jurists, and Sufi thought. However, it was felt that there was sufficient material as it is without the inclusion of such contributions, as well as a concern that the study may become diluted in the process. For the same reasons, the thesis is

[1] Geertz (1973) p.205

concentrating on Islam as an Arabic phenomenon. Remembering that the aim is to determine the essential 'soul' of Islam, the formative period has a profound impact upon the Islamic psyche. The paradigms that are considered in this thesis have undergone significant transformations over the years, but if we are to get to the essence of the paradigms, that is to the hermeneutical core, then the variety of mutli-coloured cloaks that have been placed over the paradigms need to be stripped away. This is not to say that the works of Islamic philosophers, or the legal scholars, or mysticism, or Islam as it is expressed outside of the Arabic phenomenon are not an important and integral part of Islam. As already pointed out, there are many Islams, but a study such as this can only focus on 'one Islam'.

When, for example, we look to the life of the Prophet and, in particular, in relation to the establishment of the first *umma* in Medina, we see that social justice was a key virtue. A *Muslim* was a man or woman who was prepared to submit their entire being to Allah and to behave to one another with justice, equity and compassion. The ritual prayer, *salat*, was designed to counter the perceived inequality, arrogance and materialism of Mecca. By prostrating their bodies it teaches the Muslim to lay aside his or her pride and selfishness for, before Allah, mankind is nothing. Similarly *zakat* and fasting during Ramadan stress the need to consider the injustice of society. The *umma* was initially guided by practical compassion in which there was a fair distribution of wealth; elements far more important that theological or philosophical speculation. Reference in the Qur'an to theological speculation is referred to as *zanna*, self-indulgent whimsy about ineffable matters that nobody can ascertain one way or another. We are in the fortunate position of being able to devote much of our energies to 'self-indulgent whimsy', but this was not the case amongst the first Muslims, and was not, therefore, considered to be important in terms of what it meant to be a Muslim. Far more important was *jihad*, a personal struggle to live a virtuous life. It is this existential element that is frequently forgotten in modern dialogue; even the term *jihad* has taken on negative connotations. The Qur'an insists that its teachings are not new, but a 'reminder' of past teachings. At the fundamental level, Islam teaches what it considers to be inherent in nature. For the Muslim to enter the 'transcendent' he or she must live according to Allah's will which is essentially

practical and simple. The aim is *tawhid* which can give the Muslim intimations of the unity of God.

The *rashidun* had to confront such difficult questions as to what form the *umma* should take and what kind of leadership it would have. During this time only Arabs could be Muslims, but generally Muslims lived peaceably with non-Muslims, especially as most of the people they encountered were *ahl al-kitab* (People of the Book). The Arabs at this time thought that only descendents of Ishmael could be Muslim and so conversion was not encouraged, and so the People of the Book were accorded *dhimmi* status, which was also rewarding financially as they had to pay a 'protection' tax that Muslims were exempt from. The Muslims, once they conquered a territory, lived in separate garrison towns, *amsar*. These *amsar* were effectively Arab enclaves, 'untainted' by foreign mores. The first *fitnah*, or civil war, between Ali and Muawiyyah, is significant in that it resulted in the Islamic capital moving to Damascus. It seemed to many that Islam was moving away from its cradle and, perhaps, losing sight of its original ethos. It is not surprising, then, that the paradigms of the Prophet, the Qur'an, Medina and the *rashidun* are perceived as ingredients of the Golden Age for Islam for, as history demonstrates, the result of the first *fitnah* created a very different Islam from that known by Muhammad. In time the Islamic empire was ruled by a wealthy, absolute and hereditary monarchy and the old 'Meccan' values of self-interest and inequality re-emerged. There are certainly justifiable and pragmatic reasons as to why Islam drifted away from its essence, in the same way it can be said the institution of Christianity differs from the teachings of Christ. However, this does not alter the fact that Islam, especially Sunni Islam, did drift from its core ethos and became, in effect, a powerful, politically, militarily and economically successful empire. It was still 'Islamic' in the broadest sense of the term, but had lost its true essence. The best example of how things had changed is the case of Caliph Harun al-Rashid (786-809) who isolated himself from his subjects, the courtiers kissed the ground in his presence, and the executioner stood behind him to demonstrate the Caliph's power over life and death. How far removed this was from the leadership of the Prophet! It was also during this time of al-Rashid that the Greek philosophical texts were translated into Arabic and

such philosophical speculation was encouraged. In customs and beliefs, Islam became more Persian than Arabic and, in parallel, became less 'Islamic' in its essentials.

One could go on and explore how Islam, in its historical development, deviated from its original paradigms, but to do so would only inform the reader how Islam has become 'many Islams' and embraced beliefs, cultures and traditions of cultures external to Arabia. Rather, the concern here is with Islam as an essentially Arabic phenomenon in an attempt to determine its essence. In this respect, this thesis has much in common with many of the characteristics of the Islamic revivalism of such notable Muslim scholars such as Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d.855) and Ibn Taimiyya (1263-1328). What is evident in much Islamic discourse on issues of Islamic identity is this stress to 'return' to the Islam that existed at the time of Muhammad, Medina and the *rashidun*, and so to engage in Islam as it developed beyond those confines would only obfuscate the primary purpose of the thesis.

2. The Events of September 11th 2001 and its Relevance to this Thesis

The debate proceeding from September 11th has raised yet again the issue of Islamic identity, of what constitutes the political philosophy of over one billion Muslims. Salman Rushdie has called for moderate Muslims who favour trying to reconcile Islam with 'modernity' to come forth:

"The only aspect of modernity in which the terrorists are interested is technology, which they see as a weapon that can be turned against its makers. If terrorism is to be defeated, the world of Islam must take on board the secularist-humanist principles on which the modern is based, and without which their countries' freedom will remain a distant dream."[1]

[1] The Guardian, 'A War that Presents Us All With a Crisis of Faith', 3/11/01

In another response to September 11th, Don Cupitt wrote:

"Our Christianity reeks of humanism, whereas Islam is totally without it. In Islam they do not commemorate the dead or permit any human image in a place of worship. A man may kiss and hold the hand of another man in public, but husband and wife walk separately. She is veiled. Our humanitarian ethic is entirely religious in its inspiration; Islam lacks any such tradition. Another factor, equally important, is that we are products of the Reformation. The crucial point is that it has been shown that religion can be criticised and reformed; and, if that is so, then anything else can be criticised and reformed...Islam has never undergone such a change. It has never reconciled itself to critical thinking, or to the idea that the individual thinker may be right against the world. It cannot accept the idea that religion needs continual self-criticism and reform in order to develop aright. It does not accept the idea of an autonomous, secular sphere of life that can and should function independently of religious control."[1]

The suggestion that Islam is "totally without" humanism and that it lacks an ability to think critically or subject itself to continual self-criticism and reform goes totally against historical evidence.

What is evident from debates on the nature of Islam is the confusion between the *perception* of Islam as a historical phenomenon with that as an ideal. It has been interesting to note how the scholars and journalists have responded to the events of September 11th: initially as presenting a 'politically correct' but largely uninformed thesis that the events had nothing to do with Islam to, after a few weeks, varying theses that Islam *is* in some way responsible, but still a confusion as to what is meant by 'Islam'.

States, politicians and groups that declare themselves to be under the umbrella of 'Islamic' only aid such confusion. Whether it be Ayatollah Khomeini's establishment of an 'Islamic government' in Iran in 1979 or, in October 1981 the assassination of the Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat on the basis that he was a 'pharaoh' and an opposer of attempts to achieve a legitimate Islamic government. Since then, many states have claimed to represent true Islam, yet they vary from Iran, Pakistan, the Sudan and Saudi Arabia. Any study of such states presents the difficulty of finding what they all have in common that could possibly be called

[1] The Guardian, 'Comparative Religions', 27/10/01

'Islamic government'. Further, new religious forces that have earned world status such as Hezbollah, Hamas, al-Qaeda, and the FIS have utilised methods such as assassination and terrorism in an attempt to establish an Islamic government which has presented a perception of Islam that is hardly favourable towards its more supposedly 'enlightened' aspects. The fact is that peace and *egalite* do not make good news stories. Rather, the image of Islam as a 'religion of the sword', as inherently aggressive with its *fatwas* and *jihads*, has been the image more readily presented and newsworthy.

Bearing all of this in mind, how then are we to reach any conclusions as to what is Islam? Which religious group, if any, is getting it right? To what extent are these contemporary presentations of Islam representative of the only true Islam *li kull makan wa zaman* ('for all time and all place')? Leon Carl Brown raises the question that must be borne in mind throughout this study:

"No serious person maintains that the this-worldly manifestation of, say, Christianity is the same today as it was in the time of Luther or Aquinas or Augustine or Paul. One accepts Christianity's diversity throughout time and space. Isn't it plausible to expect roughly the same of Islam in history?"[1]

As part of the central thesis of this work – the aim to show that Islam is not so alien or 'other' as often portrayed – we need to be clear as to how this 'otherness' is described.

3. Outline of Thesis

Having placed the importance of the issues in context in this chapter, Chapter Two will clearly define the key terms that will be used throughout the thesis. After briefly considering why Nietzsche is important to the topic, the four key Islamic paradigms of the Qur'an, the Prophet, Medina, and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs will be outlined. After which the concept of the Transhistorical will be defined, key to this is the philosophy of Mawlana Mawdudi as the archetypal

[1] Brown, L. Carl, (2000) p. 3

Transhistorical. This will then be contrasted with the concept of Historical Islam which is informed by such concepts as secularisation and the Nietzschean 'soul'. In this respect, Nietzsche is the Historical archetype.

Chapter Three will move on to consider in more detail the justification for adopting Nietzsche's philosophy as a methodological 'tool' in considering Islamic paradigms. Central to this is the ensuing examination of Nietzsche's religiosity. That is to say, to what extent can Nietzsche be classed as a 'religious atheist'? This is an important consideration, as a popular approach to Nietzsche regards the German philosopher as an atheist pure and simple (as if there were such a thing as a pure and simple atheist) and a consequence of this is that it is assumed that any contribution he makes to debates in the realm of theology will be purely negative. An essential appeal of his philosophy is his use of religious language, metaphors and symbols; together with the fact that Nietzsche himself does not escape from his own 'soul', that is his Lutheran upbringing. Further, Nietzsche was specifically addressing an audience at a specific time and place (that is the coming new century in Europe) and what Nietzsche perceived to be an important turning-point for Europe: the dawn of a new age in which the old God was dead and society was confronted with an increase in the secularisation process. Nietzsche's 'religiosity' rests in his lack of 'faith' in the secular order to provide humanity with any meaningful existence. Nietzsche is, to an extent, a product of the German Reformation. Islam, in our current age, appears to be faced with a crisis not dissimilar to the audience Nietzsche was addressing. Confronted, as it is, by the secularisation process, calls are being made for a form of 'Islamic Reformation' after many hundreds of years of relative self-confidence. Islam, then, is faced with a number of options, the two most fundamental being either to follow the same trajectory of Christianity in Europe and turning its God into the 'dead God' that Nietzsche is so critical of, or to learn from Nietzsche's religiosity and embrace a 'living God' that does not perceive secularisation as an enemy. In considering this, the response of Christian theology to Nietzsche's religiosity, and how this might be applied to Islamic theology (bearing in mind that this is a subject for which Islamic scholars have remained largely silent), can prove very helpful. In particular the works of Giles Fraser and Alistair Kee will be

considered. One Muslim scholar, however, who has embraced Nietzsche's philosophy – particularly his call for the *Übermensch* – is Muhammad Iqbal, whose contribution will also be examined.

Nietzsche studied philology, the determination of the meaning and validity of texts. He extended this skill beyond text however, to a hermeneutic interpretation of the world. For the Muslim, the holy text, the Qur'an, *is* the world. Chapter Four will set the tone of the whole thesis, with its emphasis on the importance of contextualisation. Such emphasis is often a reluctant practice amongst Islamic scholars, which, it shall be argued, only does more harm than good if one is to argue that the fundamental message of Islam is applicable to modern, pluralistic society. At the same time, it should be pointed out that this is not an exercise in political correctness, in adopting a contemporary trend in intellectualism but, rather, a genuine attempt to determine the Islamic 'soul' in the Nietzschean sense of the word.

In the spirit of the Nietzschean emphasis on context, this chapter will consider the contribution made by mostly modern Islamic scholars who have been prepared to challenge the Transhistorical, orthodox approach to Islam, notably the works of Fazlur Rahman, Mohammed Arkoun and Mohamed Talbi. Although it may be stretching the analogy somewhat, they can be seen as precursors of something of an 'Islamic Reformation'. Nietzsche calls for a new philosopher who will present a *Weltanschauung* for a new Europe. Likewise, Rahman does not believe that adopting an Historical approach to Islam, to contextualising the Qur'an, will result in watering down its power, but rather will lead to Islamic revivalism, to a Qur'anic *Weltanschauung*. Further, like Nietzsche, Rahman – following on from his medieval Islamic precursors - calls for the coming together of philosophy and religion; for the tools of rational Western philosophy to be used in conjunction with the values and world outlook of Islam. Arkoun is also steeped within the Western philosophical tradition and the influence of Nietzsche, via the works of Derrida especially, is clearly evident. In interpreting the Qur'an, both Rahman and Arkoun recognise how important it is to contextualise those common terms that are contained within the holy text. How are we to understand what it means

to be a Muslim if we do not appreciate how such terms denoting 'Muslim' were used in the Qur'anic era? The Qur'an is an important paradigm in the Muslim psyche, and so we must be clear what the Qur'an is saying to Muslims of today. Mohamed Talbi's contribution to this debate is crucial here. He gives us an understanding of the Muslim as someone who *acts* in defence of social justice, of the upholder of values that are life-enhancing and in no way contradictory to the values of the Western world. In this sense 'Muslim' is not a label or a birth-right, but rather an attitude as well as an active power for a value-society.

Chapter Four looks at what was meant by '*muslim*' in the Qur'anic context. That is, what kind of person constituted a '*muslim*' in seventh century Arabia. However, the term 'Muslim' with a capital 'M' is usually understood very differently in the modern world, as we have already suggested. In the contextualised Qur'anic sense, anyone who upholds the values of the Qur'an is a '*muslim*'. Yet, in our modern world, this is not the only 'kind of *muslim*' that needs to be considered for there exists some 1.2 billion people who *do* give themselves the label of 'Muslim' (and, henceforth, 'Muslim' with a capital 'M' is referring to these people) and would wish to distinguish themselves from the Christian, Jew, atheist and so on.

Chapter Five seeks to determine the 'soul' of *Jahiliyya* and how this relates to our understanding of Islam. The term '*Jahiliyya*' usually (though not exclusively) refers to the time prior to the message of Muhammad, to a state of 'ignorance'. Implied here is the belief that *Jahiliyya* is the antonym of Islam. If we are to challenge the assertion that the religious and secular cannot be separate in Islam then it helps to contextualise the debate by showing the extent to which Arabia – the 'cradle' of Islam – would have allowed such a situation to exist. Remembering the Nietzschean analogy that concepts do not evolve autonomously, but are fragments of a broader perspective like fauna in continents, we can only understand Islam by seeing it within the context of its social, cultural, political and, indeed, geographical environment.

The Transhistorical is not entirely separate from the Historical. The two interlink and feed from each other. To argue for an emphasis of the Historical, an insight into its paradigmatic 'moments' is required. Likewise, the Transhistorical transforms these 'moments' into statues that people will not let crumble. The 'shattering of idols' requires an understanding of why those idols exist in the first place and, indeed, whether we have a *right* to shatter them will be governed by the extent to which they hinder rather than help Islam's revival. Nietzsche was as much a philosopher of history as a philosopher of morals, for the two are indelibly linked as he demonstrates most notably in *The Genealogy of Morals.* If we are to assert that Islam, in its Historical face, is compatible with Western pluralistic values and a civil society, then we must adopt an historical-critical approach to the 'moments' in Islamic history. Here we are still contextualising, but now also going beyond the text to the people and times of Arabia. What, then, do the 'moments' of *Jahiliyya*, of Medina, of Mecca, tell us about the soul of Islam?

Important here is the ground-breaking work of Ibn Khaldun, particularly in his use of the concepts of *asabiyah* and *mulk*. *Asabiyah* signifies the internal cohesion of a society, often brought about by unity of blood or faith, whereas *mulk* is the stage when a society is in decline as boundaries between kinship groups weaken. These concepts bear a close relation to Nietzsche's view of society requiring a periodic reassessment of its values. For society to survive and prosper it must contain mechanisms that encourage renewal and reform. As we look at Islamic history, in a very broad sense we can see that, in the case of Sunni Islam, there has always existed a tension between the desire for maintaining the established order and the Islamic imperative - contained within the paradigm of the Bedouin ethos as well as the Prophet – for constant renewal and reform. When Islam has been confident it has allowed for *asabiyah* to assert itself. However, in times of insecurity Sunni Islam especially 'tightens up' and hides behind an impractical utopic vision as a way of preventing criticism and questioning: its people feel a sense of guilt and fear if they make any attempt to question the established order. Inevitably, Islam will atrophy unless it allows for a fresh intake of *asabiyah*. As will be examined in Chapter Four, there are some – though still small in numbers – who are starting to assert a different view of Islam; of Islam as Historical. Chapter Five moves on

to more modern research into the Bedouin ethos in an attempt to ascertain how this relates to the situation in Mecca at the time of Muhammad, leaving aside the position of Muhammad until the next chapter.

In Chapter Six, the Constitution of Medina is examined to see what it can tell us about two very important paradigms: Medina as the first Islamic State, and Muhammad as the Prophet and leader of this state. The work of the Turkish Muslim scholar Ali Bulaç is important here, as is the contribution made by the controversial Egyptian Muslim legal scholar Ali 'Abd al-Raziq. The picture that will be presented of Medina is of a society that is pluralistic in nature with a leader who could not claim to be a political and religious 'king' of any kind, but rather a charismatic arbiter of disputes with a mission to imbue *asabiyah* back into his home city of Mecca. In sharp contrast, the views of Mohmmed Bamyeh, who teaches social theory and comparative civilisations at the Gallatin School at New York City, will also be examined. In particular, his conception of Muhammad as taking full advantage of the Transhistorical, presenting himself as a prophet who could command allegiance like a King David.

As history progresses, we shall see in this chapter how the authority of the Prophet is indeed transformed to a semi-divine status, and is used by the Caliphs and Sultans to legitimise their own authority. The Islamic State is presented as a utopic vision, ruled by Philosopher Kings: the paradigm of Medina and the Prophet are used in the Transhistorical sense to support this concept of Islam. Likewise, a further paradigm, that of the *Rashidun* (the Rightly-Guided Caliphs), is utilised by the adherents of the Transhistorical to further enhance the view of an unobtainable, pristine Islam.

By way of conclusion, Chapter Seven will consider the options for the future, especially in terms of how far certain Muslim scholars have been prepared to go in supporting the process of secularisation and recognising the authority of Islamic paradigms. This chapter will return, first of all, to the philosophy of Mawdudi as symbolising the Transhistorical and then will consider the views of other Muslim scholars who, though fitting within the Transhistorical mould, have

been more prepared to admit the need for individual human will. The conclusion will be reached, in line with Nietzsche's philosophy, that it is the human will to power that is the ultimate paradigm. In addressing the question of what kind of society will allow the assertion of the human will, Nietzsche is not anti-democratic provided it allows room for the rare, unique and noble to breathe. Nietzsche emphasis is upon the importance of culture and he is aware that democratic politics is capable of promoting and furthering culture, although he is "speaking of democracy as something yet to come."[1] Nietzsche's stress on 'culture' goes back to his earliest writings. For example, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he emphasises the importance of art (art in the Greek sense) as salvation and as providing the deepest insights into the human condition. Essentially, a society which praises culture is the antithesis of one that promotes instrumental or utilitarian values at the expense of its cultural heritage. The problem with democracies – least those that we are familiar with (and Nietzsche was familiar with in terms of the German state of the time) – is that they are driven by a money-economy which, Nietzsche believed, sees no value in culture. In this sense, Islam, as Nietzschean 'culture' and in the possession of important paradigms that emphasise the human will to create and re-evaluate, can have an important role to play in any society.

[1] Nietzsche (1986b) p.285

Chapter Two

The Historical versus the Transhistorical: Terms Defined

"I want to live among Muslims for a good long time, especially where their faith is most devout: in this way I expect to hone my appraisement and my eye for all that is European."

- Friedrich Nietzsche, March 13, 1881[1]

1. Why Nietzsche?

What does it *mean* to be a Muslim? Any attempt to answer such a question risks leading the enquirer down a path with many side-roads; each seemingly offering an answer but, equally, leading one astray from the original route. Maintaining any sense of direction, of not being side-tracked, requires one to concentrate on a particular 'kind' of Islam. This 'type', as shall be demonstrated, is not picked off from the shelf because it suits this thesis like a neatly-fitting glove. Rather, it is an attempt to get at the very *soul* of Islam, it essence, its psyche. Nietzsche, of course, stands in a long line of those who "have attempted to assassinate the old concept of the soul."[2] However, while wishing demolish the harmful concept of individual eternal souls, "we do not need to get rid of 'the soul' itself nor do without one of our oldest, most venerable hypotheses, which the bungling naturalists tend to do, losing 'the soul' as soon as they've touched on it."[3] What is needed is "new and refined versions of the hypothesis of the soul"[4] For example, "mortal soul", "soul as the multiplicity of the subject" or "soul as the social

[1] Nietzsche (1986b) Vol. 6, p.68. Quoted in Safranski (2002) p. 219
[2] Nietzsche (1998) Section 54, p.49
[3] *ibid.* Section 12, p.14
[4] *ibid.*

construct of drives and emotions".[1] Here, Nietzsche is hypothesising a natural soul, and so to seek out what is the soul is scientific, psychological exercise. Whereas the will to power[2] is the fundamental process of nature as a whole, psychology studies the forms that process takes in its evolutionary articulation in the human species. The study of the soul, then, is "a morphology and evolutionary theory of the will to power."[3]

Why Nietzsche? Nietzsche was not only a philosopher, but also a psychologist and a philologist. His psychological insights get at the very roots of what it means to be human, while his philology appreciated the importance of language and interpretation. These disciplines together make Nietzsche a valuable contributor to a debate that is so concerned with the relation of metaphysical beliefs to the everyday world, to the Muslim 'psyche', and to a belief that relies heavily on text as a way of interpreting the world.

There is an additional reason for making Nietzsche the platform for this study. At the centre of this thesis is the topical question of how Islam is to confront the force of secularisation. What Islam is facing today has many parallels with what Europe was facing at the time of Nietzsche: a crisis of identity resulting from the confrontation between seemingly opposing worldviews. Then it was the religious, specifically Christian, worldview versus the secular. Nietzsche was the first philosopher to fully confront the prevailing loss of religious belief in Western Europe with his declaration that 'God is dead'. What Nietzsche meant by this was that society – that is to say, *European* society – no longer had a need for the Christian God for He has outlived his usefulness. Does the same fate face the Muslim God?

To determine the soul of Islam is so important, for it addresses the very essence of what it means to be a Muslim and, as a consequence of that, how Muslims should respond to the world they find themselves in. More than that, however, it is important for the non-Muslim to respond to *that* Islamic response! When two worlds, two souls, confront each other there is always potential for conflict,

[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 54, p.49
[2] see p. 79 of this thesis for a definition of the will to power
[3] Nietzsche (1998) Section 23, p.23

likewise there is always potential for mutual understanding. It is regrettable that conflicts, certainly of the political and military kind, seem more the norm than understanding in the present context and so an appreciation of the bases for such a clash can, hopefully, help to alleviate it. The crux of the issue is the extent to which the 'two worlds' are perceived to be so incompatible that conflict is more likely than peace. In such a case we are confronted with a series of options: Firstly, to accept the inevitability of conflict (an option that is surely the least desirable). Secondly, to accept that the differences are great and that communication and co-operation is, at best, extremely difficult, resulting in maintaining a respectful distance. Thirdly, to attempt to find those areas in which there is some commonality – for example, in doctrinal matters such as the belief in one God, or common ethical codes – and focus on those. Fourthly, to consider the possibility that although religious differences may make inter-faith dialogue a challenging prospect, this should not result in political conflict as this has little to do with how the *faiths* engage in dialogue. It is this fourth option that this thesis will argue is most in line with how Islam was perceived

2. Key Islamic Paradigms Outlined

In the broader sense, this thesis is concerned with what is commonly referred to as 'Islamic revivalism'. Certain forms of revivalism have a tendency to look back to the past; to the 'glory days' of Islam, and, consequently, the past moulds the present. More specifically, the concern here is with the key Islamic paradigms, and their influences on Islamic thought. The specific Islamic paradigms are part of what is called the 'Golden Age Narrative'. This consists of four key paradigms:

1. The revelation of the Qur'an. The Qur'an, the holy scripture of Islam, is the key paradigm. In fact, it is more than a sacred text, for, in certain respects, it occupies for Muslims the position Christ has for Christians. It is the word of God and most Muslim scholars consider these divine utterances to have been made by the Prophet Muhammad in the course of

his ministry, starting around 610 CE to his death in 632 CE. (Detailed in Chapter Four)

2. The Prophet Muhammad. As the divinely-chosen 'vessel' for the Qur'an, the life of the Prophet is seen as the paradigm for the Perfect Muslim. Muhammad was born in around 570 CE although little is of significance for the Golden Age Narrative until the revelation of the Qur'an in 610CE. (Detailed in Chapter Six)

3. The state of Medina. As the first Islamic state, the understanding of its political, economic and social milieu, as well as the role of Muhammad as the perceived leader of this state, informs the Golden Age Narrative. The existence of this state dates from the *Hijra* (the migration from Mecca to Medina) in 622 CE (also the start of the Islamic calendar) to the death of Muhammad in 632 CE. (Detailed in Chapter Six)

4. The Rightly-Guided Caliphs (*Khalifat-e-Rashidun*). The first four Caliphs that followed the death of Muhammad are considered 'rightly-guided' primarily because they all knew Muhammad personally and so are the first generations of Muslims, or what are known as the Companions of the Prophet (*sahabah*). The Companions are the men and women who lived, worked, and fought beside the Prophet and, consequently, the practices of these Caliphs are seen as paradigms of Islamic leadership. This time period covers 632 CE until the assassination of the fourth Caliph Ali in 661 CE. This generation of leaders oversaw the opening stage of Muslim expansion well beyond the Arabian peninsula. (Detailed in Chapter Six)

In total, then, the Golden Age Narrative covers the period 610 CE to 661 CE; fifty-one years in all. Although a relatively short period of time, this was an age of incredible occurrences, doctrinal developments and divisions, and political strife. Yet, despite its nascent problems, Islam not only survived but flourished, hence its label as a 'Golden Age'. The Golden Age Narrative, the Utopic vision of Islamic thought – what shall be referred to usually as Transhistorical Islam (see

below) – is by no means simple. It is, rather, extremely complex in its diversity and, in fact, in the wide variety of elements that are presented to the mind of the Muslim follower of paradigmatic imagery. History, for Sayyid Qutb (1906-66)[1] is "a memory determined by the authority"[2]. By 'authority', Qutb means events, people or myths that can impose themselves upon the collective memory of a culture. For Islamic discourse, that authority is primarily the Golden Age Narrative. It should be pointed out, however, that this is *not* an historical survey. The aim is, rather, to examine how this period is relevant to contemporary Islamic discourse.

3. The Utopic Vision: The Transhistorical Defined

Although theology may well have implications for political life, it is not usually, per se, *political*. Rather, politics is concerned with formal institutions and power relations within an organised setting that are separate from religious organisations.[3] It is in this sense that one can talk of 'politics' as a separate entity from 'religion', and it also follows from this that the political sphere – being separate – is secularised in nature. The difficulty arises when it is suggested, as in the case of Islam, that its religious doctrine makes no distinction between the religious and political and, in fact, as in the case of many Islamists[4], Islam demands that all political matters (in fact, all spheres of life) are within the domain of religion; religion *is* life. In this sense, pure religion is all-encompassing and aims to rid society of its irreligiousness, of its 'impurities', and it is this that will be defined as Transhistorical Islam in this thesis. It is this approach, more than any other, which has resulted in such misunderstanding and confrontation.

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[1] According to Karen Armstrong, Qutb "can be called the founder of Sunni fundamentalism" (Armstrong, 2001, p. 239). His importance rests in the influence of Mawdudi on his thought and his contribution to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood.

[2] Diyab (1987) p. 105

[3] Haynes (1993) p.8

[4] An Islamist is one who seeks to increase the Islamisation of society through political measures; as opposed to an Islamicist who – though a pious Muslim and a believer in Islam as the one true religion – does not necessarily perceive politics as an instrument by which conversion to Islam can be achieved.

The notion of utopia is, of course, in itself a complex phenomenon. From the Greek words '*ou*' and '*t-pos*' meaning 'no place' its appeal in history is that it seems to belong to mankind's essence to project something utopian beyond itself. Because human beings are finite, a mixture of being and non-being, there is a contradiction between what we perceive as what we essentially are and what we actually are, which utopian ideas try to remove. In its *positive* form, by expressing Man's essence, it is *Truth*; it is what Man is. Utopia is also a realm of possibilities, through striving to achieve utopia. Also, it is power, because it is able to transform that which is given. However, in a more *negative* way, the perception of utopia as historical reality can result in Untruth, resulting in alienation from one's actual essence. Frustration, also, can enter if one describes utopia as a possibility when, in fact, it is an impossibility. Utopia then becomes impotent; a pious myth that lacks the power to transform. Ironically, however, this very impotence can be used as a political tool, as a form of power over others.

It seems a facet of human nature to perceive the world we live in as imperfect and to create visions of a greater world. However, it is one thing to have visions, it is quite another to engage in what we may call *active utopianism*: that is, to actively engage in creating a utopia on Earth. Also, unlike much – though not all – philosophical speculation upon the nature of a utopian society, (Plato's work *The Republic*, for example) reference is made to a society that is recognised as having never existed in any substantial form. Where philosophers do make reference to a utopia that they believe to have actually existed, for example in forms of philosophical Romanticism, these refer to a past society where man exists in a state of perfect relationship with nature, as in Rousseau. Rousseau did not see the state of nature as a brutal war, as Hobbes did, but imagined a world of plenty, in which our pre-societal ancestors could easily survive picking berries off the trees and sleeping in natural shelters. Although society corrupts it may still be possible to hang on to that utopic vision of the 'natural man'.

Islamic political thought, however, bases its utopic vision within the Golden Age Narrative. It is, therefore, usually perceived as having a concrete reality in a not-

too-distant past. Therefore, that which has existed in the past can be realisable once more – to a certain extent at least – in the future. Not only that, but – unlike Rousseau – this form of Islamic society is totally in line with nature. In fact, it *is* nature; for man is naturally religious and Medina was the perfect religious society, as Islam, of course, is the one and only true religion. Having said that, such a utopic conception is inevitably entangled within mythological, eschatological, legal and didactic contexts.

An important – and often confused – issue is the question of authority and sovereignty. Normally, this issue is dealt with in terms of either the nature and form of the legal system or the nature and form of authority, the state, and governmental institutions. There continues to be a number of views as to what actually constitutes a Muslim legal code, from where that code originates, and its relevance to contemporary discourse. We must also be careful of differing terminology[1]. Further difficulties are encountered over what is meant by the perfect Islamic State. Ernest Gellner states that "Islam is the blueprint of a social order"[2]. To be a Muslim is to live in an Islamic State, for ultimate authority rests in divine order. The status of polity is a vital issue for contemporary discourse because much of the tension that exists today was laid back at the beginnings of Islam.

Political Islamism advocates a political order which makes possible the application of *sharia* law.; it is the realisation of a utopia. The *topos* where this order of perfection exists is the time of Prophet Muhammad and the *Rashidun*. Medina is perceived as the authentic Islamic community, with Muhammad as the authentic Islamic leader. This society is mirrored in the mind of those who speak of a return to Islam. Medina is perceived by many as possessing its own distinctive essence which is neither Marxist, socialist, democratic or dictatorial. Such claims that Islam is socialist or, more recently, liberalist may well be seen as temporal structures issued by Muslim apologists which are, in fact, separate from

[1] For example, the blurring of the real distinction between *Shari'a* and *fiqh* ('jurisprudence', the process of 'understanding' of the will of God) and the status of the traditional sources of law.
[2] Gellner (1979), p. 12

the ontological basis of Medinan society, of the authentic Islamic state. They may be accused of being 'imported ideologies'.

A common remark is that there is no 'church' in Sunni Islam. Throughout Sunni religious history, the main instrument of religious organisation and implementation has been the state. Therefore, it is not altogether surprising that the ruler of the state should be perceived as pure in both a political and religious sense and should be seen as the primary executor of divine law. The implementation of Islam is public policy. The legislature cannot legislate in contravention of the directives of Allah and His Prophet. The Qur'anic verse, "...judgement is for God only. He declares the truth and is the best of arbiters"[1] must be adhered to. The sovereign, therefore, has two primary functions. Firstly, to behave himself like a good Muslim and, secondly, to ensure that others do the same. The Islamic State is the divine order put into practice. What jurists refer to as *ummat al-ijaba* (the recipient community) consists of those members of the state, of the community (*umma*), which have received and submitted to the Divine Truth. This is opposed to *ummat al-da'wa* (the appeal community), which has *yet* to submit. Consequently, the Sunni Islamic world-view is divided primarily into two categories: those who are Muslims, and those who are not Muslims. The latter category are often perceived as 'in-error' and, therefore, *yet to be* Islamicised.

The Latin term *religio* means 'to bind'; and this is highly significant within Islam. To be religious, to be a Muslim, is to bind oneself, to be tied irrevocably, to what is perceived as Divine Truth. A fundamental element of religious belief *is* that there is a Truth; an Absolute Reality that is, therefore, to be distinguished from the relative. An awareness that, on the one hand, the Muslim lives in the world of the relative whilst, on the other hand, has a distinct awareness of an 'Otherness' that is the Absolute Reality. As this Other is, in effect, the 'more real', then he or she is duty-bound to follow it. The Islamic Community, in its perfection, mirrors the heavenly archetype; the *exempla* is that of Medina. The Muslim's relation to the community defines his relationship with Allah. To be a good Muslim in the

[1] Qur'an 6:57

Islamic community is to follow the laws laid down, primarily, by the Qur'an: the 'descent of the Absolute'.

Although it might be said that all religions are based upon Man and his relation to the Absolute; for the Muslim, so it is argued by the Transhistorical, this 'binding' implies much more than a personal relationship. It concerns itself with all matters of human society: marriage and divorce, inheritance and ownership, commerce, government, banking, and so on. If one was to take another great monotheistic belief, that of Christianity, we note that it emphasises sacrament and communion – as opposed to law – and the rituals that contain them. Christ's birth, death and resurrection are sacraments which believers internalise through ritual. Therefore, salvation in Christianity lies in acceptance of Christ as Messiah as manifested in sacramental ritual (baptism, matrimony, penance, eucharist, etc.). The world of politics is now largely outside that of religion. This is very different in Islam. Muhammad's life-history has been translated into a set of laws and decrees that govern – or *should* govern – Man's behaviour. His life – his marriages, transactions, policy decisions, treaties, etc. – is all part of the Golden Age Narrative. Whereas, in Christianity, there is emphasis on sacrament, for Muslims there is the whole world. Daily life *is* sacrament, and salvation comes through living every aspect of your life as a Muslim. In the Qur'an it states: "This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour to you. I have chosen Islam to be your faith."[1] The key word here is 'perfected'; it is the perfect, the complete religion. It is, therefore, fully comprehensive. There simply is no other way of life or thought. It is the complete religion, the last religion. There can be no other revelation simply because there is nothing left to reveal. There can be no more prophets, for Muhammad was the Seal of the Prophets, and there is nothing else to prophesise.

Man is a theomorphic being; endowed with the intelligence (*al-'aql*) which can lead him to the Truth, to knowledge of Allah and to unity (*tawhid*). The concept of the state, therefore, is intimately tied up with revelation and the concept of *tawhid*. *Tawhid*, the 'Unity of God', affirms the radical monotheism of Islam:

[1] Qur'an 5:4

"Christianity is essentially a mystery which veils the Divine from man...In Islam, however, it is man who is veiled from God...Islam is thus essentially a way of knowledge; it is a way of gnosis (*ma'rifah*)...Islam leads to that essential knowledge which integrates our being, which makes us know what we are and be what we know or in other words integrates knowledge and being in the ultimate unitive vision of reality."[1]

God is one, and the doctrine extends to all of creation. The world in which we are living is His creation: "He created for you all that the earth contains; then, ascending to the sky, He fashioned it into seven heavens. He has knowledge of all things."[2] Therefore, God's will is to be realised in every area of life. *Tawhid*, for many, is the principle that brings the Islamic community together. As Muhammad Iqbal (whose philosophy will be considered later) said: *tawhid* "is the soul and body of our Community."[3]

We are presented with man as a rational being; unique to all creatures in possessing the power of reason. This concept of man appears as Platonic, or Cartesian; the need to exercise reason to gain access to the truth. However, reason cannot be purely relied upon; hence the emphasis on revealed doctrine. Why the need for revealed truth if we are theomorphic by nature?

"Man needs revelation because although a theomorphic being he is by nature negligent and forgetful; he is by nature imperfect. Therefore, he needs to be reminded...Man cannot alone uplift himself spiritually...Intelligence does lead to God but provided it is wholesome and health (*salim*), and it is precisely revelation, this objective manifestation of the Intellect, that guarantees this wholesomeness and permits the intelligence to function correctly and not be impeded by the passions."[4]

Reason can be viewed as a tool; a tool to understanding of that which is already revealed. In Sunni Islam there are no 'mysteries' as such; all that can be revealed is revealed; but the perfection that exists can be ignored, for man is inevitably imperfect. Characteristics of imperfection would include being distracted from

[1] Nasr (1991) p. 21, 22
[2] Qur'an 2:29
[3] Iqbal (1968) p.154
[4] Nasr (1991) p. 22, 23

one's own religion; whether it be a quest for materialism, or the pursuit of some other goal or desire that does not sit comfortably with Qur'anic doctrine. Hence, to live in a non-Islamic state is to be subject to the beliefs, desires and so on of what is essentially non-Islamic. A Muslim living in a capitalist society, for example, may neglect his religion and engage in the pursuit of wealth for the sake of wealth; which could lead to the accusation of *shirk*[1]; the greatest sin of all in Islam.

Tawhid is not only a metaphysical assertion about the nature of the Absolute; it is also a method of integrating the seemingly disparate parts of creation into a wholeness. Such a belief has political implications in that the Muslim should not accept a body politic that is not Islamic. The Sunni Muslim believes that his religion has been revealed to him in its complete, perfect form and he should, therefore, follow what is in the revealed text; the Qur'an; it is *furqan* – the instrument by which man can discriminate between the Absolute and the relative, good and evil, truth and falsehood – and it is *umm al-kitab* – the 'mother of books', the prototype of all knowledge. The Qur'an contains within it the seed of Sacred Law, of *sharia*. The Muslim is in the state of *striving*; striving to follow the dictates that are revealed within the Qur'an. But to follow these dictates, it is usually asserted that the Muslim must live in *dar al-Islam* (the abode of Islam), where Allah's *sharia* is implemented, as opposed to *dar al-harb* (the abode of war). A society is Islamic provided it is governed by a Muslim and according to *sharia* law; it need not be the case that the majority of people in that society are also Muslims.

Inevitably, the belief that Islam can only be perfectly practised in an Islamic state has implications for political authority. How can a Muslim really be a true Muslim while living in *dar al-harb*? While obeying the laws of non-Muslims? It has, in the past, raised a number of difficulties; not only between those who are Muslims as opposed to those who are non-Muslims; but also between Muslims themselves over the duties and responsibilities resting upon the Muslim to obey the law of the land. Also, of course, opinions differ as to what constitutes the

[1] The 'association' of lesser beings (or things) with the deity

perfect Islamic State. And what of the sovereign? How much power should the caliph, sultan, king, president, have in the state? Ultimately, once more, Islam refers to the Golden Age Narrative for guidance.

One cannot reasonably assume that the arrival of Islam created new systems, institutions, ideas and theories out of nothing. Rather, it is generally accepted that Islam presented a new approach to existing systems. In the development of civilisations, intellectual disciplines and schools of thought, a general pattern can be perceived as a progress from a particular world-view to a more distinct intellectual school of thought; only at that point to achieve a new mode of social organisation. That is to say, a *Weltanschauung* is required that culminates in institutions which capture the spirit and message of the original philosophy in some concrete and workable form.[1] The Qur'an, it could be argued, may contain this *'Weltanschauung'* in its ideality. However, to bring this seed into a full-grown reality is another matter entirely. Muhammad's 'mission', therefore, might be seen in this light: he is 'commissioned' to 'bring forth' the message of the Qur'an and to give it concrete reality. It is the transference of the perfect, metaphysical reality that is the Qur'an onto an imperfect world as best as possible. In a Platonic sense it is rather like the Demiurge moulding the world using the Perfect Forms as His archetype. The difference, however, is that – for Muslims – that-which-is-formed, in the creation of the state of Medina, is *in itself* an archetype.

As Patrick Bannerman points out:

"For Muslims, there is an added complexity in that the era of *Rashidun*, the 'Golden Age' of Islam, has become an idealized state in which pristine and pure Islam sprang forth, like Aphrodite from the waves, completely furnished with all the impedimenta of a fully-fledged state and society - law, philosophy, administrative machinery, economic principles, etc. Yet as many authorities, including Muslim authorities, have conclusively demonstrated, the evolution of the impedimenta of a fully fledged state and society took place over a period of some three centuries or more following the Golden Age. Furthermore, the period of the *Rashidun* was itself one of the most innovative in the history of Islam." [2]

[1] Nasr (1991) p.10,11
[2] Bannerman (1988) p.61

3.1 The Transhistorical Islamic State Defined

The article by Bert De Vries[1], *Theocracy in Islam*, is a typical example of a Transhistorical view of the Islamic State. The view of De Vries is by no means exclusive in this respect, borrowing as he does from traditional and medieval sources of political theory. However, it has been chosen it as it is a succinct and a good summary of the Transhistorical view:

(i) Every act is a religious act and Muhammad assumed that religion was pervasive in all aspects of life. Politics, therefore, is inseparable from religion. Muhammad was not only a political leader, but also a religious revivalist.

(ii) As this Islamic theocracy developed from the tribal confederacy ruled by Muhammad from Medina to a world empire ruled by the Abbasids from Baghdad, the basic concepts of this theocracy were refined and defined both in theory and practice to the extent of homogeneity of doctrine.

(iii) God expresses his will directly and clearly to man through the body politic. Therefore, the distinction between the spiritual and political realms is either non-existent or virtually so. Also, this harmony of man and state is an attainable goal.

(iv) The assumption that God communicates His will directly through the body politic also implies the existence of revealed divine law. This revelation is in the form of the Qur'an. The Qur'an, therefore, is regarded as the literal word of God and, importantly, it is a comprehensive guidebook for all aspects of the community. This necessarily includes political directions, especially as Muhammad himself – 'divinely-guided' - became involved in the management of the State of Medina. With the passing of time, the Qur'an and the sayings of Muhammad became the base for the body of religious law known as the *sharia*. *Sharia* became the law of the state and – in the sense that the law represents the will of God – the law stands

[1] De Vries (1980)

above the state and its ruler. "In this sense it is perhaps more apropos to characterize Islamic politics as 'nomocratic' rather than 'theocratic'"[1]

(v) The criterion for membership in this body politic must, by implication, be religious. Historically, from the time of Muhammad, the full members of the community (*umma*) consisted of those that submitted to the will of God (Muslims). In theory, at least, all Muslims are equal before God; regardless of race, gender or class. The nation is defined as *Dar al-Islam* ('The House of Islam") for which there are no national boundaries and is the realm for which Islam has become politically predominant and/or the religion of the majority. In this region, government is established upon *sharia*. Muslims are not exclusive residents of *Dar al-Islam*; legal status existing for People of the Book. However, the degree of full membership of the body politic is dependent upon being a *full* Muslim.

(vi) The following are characteristic theocratic institutions of the Islamic State:

(a) The Caliphate. Muhammad's role was unique in the sense that he was a prophet and, therefore, singled out by God. His role was also that of administrator of the Islamic State. Although prophethood ended with Muhammad, the role of administrator was passed on in the form of Caliph; the 'successor' of the prophet of God. The nature and purpose of the Caliph was defined according to tradition and exterior models of leadership (notably Byzantine and Persian) and gradually declined in real power to be superseded by the sultan ('the one in charge'). For Shi'a Islam, authority rested with the Imam until – in the case of the Imamis – the twelfth Imam went into occultation. Until his return, leadership rests with the Ayatollahs.

(b) The Ulama. The Ulama have played both a scholarly and political role in Islam. Although their authority was informal, they had a real influence on the administrations of the Caliphs, Sultans and Shahs. This authority is based upon their status as interpreters of the law and, therefore, interpreters of God's will. They could thus be perceived as guardians of theocracy, acting as a check against the misuse of power by the ruler.

[1] De Vries (1980)

(vii) The traditional theocratic concept of the Islamic State was threatened and undermined by the European conquests during the period roughly 1750-1950. This saw the introduction of new, alien concepts of liberalism and nationalism.

(viii) The Islamic Resurgence that has been evident since around 1950 is a reaction against Western concepts of liberalism, democracy and nationalism. Initially, newly-independent states tended towards 'socialist' or 'communist' ideologies as a reaction against Western Imperialism. However, although some efforts were made to tally Marxism with Islam, this also proved to be alien. More recently, a desire for a return to the Golden Age of Islam; to its pure theocratic state, has been growing, and seen as a viable 'Islamic alternative'.

De Vries rightly notes that, "theocracy did not always work out ideally in practice."[1] However, it might well be argued further that theocracy has *never* worked out ideally in practice. Further, and importantly for this discussion, is the crucial issue as to whether this really *is* the Islamic ideal. Undoubtedly, it is the conventional view that is so often uttered and presented in scholarly works. However, there are conflicting views on each of the above points that might lead one to believe Islam has other, less all-encompassing, less 'theocratic' ideals.

3.2. Mawlana Mawdudi: Champion of the Transhistorical

In the same way this thesis will focus on Nietzsche as the spokesman of the Historical, the Transhistorical also requires a name to represent its many voices. The ideal candidate for this is Abu Ala Mawlana Mawdudi (1903-79). Mawdudi began his career in journalism, but became more involved in politics becoming, in 1920, a member of *Tahrik-i Hijrat*, a group opposed to British rule in India, and which urged Muslims to migrate to Afghanistan for their own safety. He wrote his first academic book, *al-Jihad fi al-Islam* which was well received by such notable Islamic scholars as Muhammad Iqbal. Mawdudi saw his central mission

[1] De Vries (1980)

in life to be a representative of the Muslim minorities in India, and he wrote prolifically on the prevailing problems for Muslims and how the Muslim might face the non-Muslim world. In this respect, his work is particularly relevant here as he symbolises the educated Muslim who is also trapped by a feeling of insecurity and a desire to protect one's identity.

A significant change of direction in his works took place from 1937 when he began for the first time to concern himself specifically with the political problems of Muslim India. This period was one of great change in the area of India as it was on the verge of achieving independence. Mawdudi was fearful that Muslim identity would be submerged by the Hindu majority. From 1937 until 1941 he published in *Tarjuman al-Quran* a series of essays dealing with the political consequences of this. The stance of the Indian National Congress, which affirmed that all Indians constitute a single nation and that a future government in India must be democratic and secular, in particular warned Mawdudi of possible risks to Islamic identity. This led him to address issues of secularisation and Muslim identity; particularly emphasising that Muslims had a 'nationality' of their own.

Mawdudi tried to examine issues from the Islamic perspective, criticising other ideologies that were dominating the Muslim mind. This led to the creation of the *Jamaat-i-Islami*, with Mawdudi as its chief until 1972. Essentially, its purpose was to propagate Islamic belief and practice and to train disciplined Muslims who could – in whatever manner – readily retort to attack. The organisation became particularly well-known after the partition of India in 1947 when it campaigned for the creation of an Islamic state for Pakistan. Although the Pakistan governments did little in practice to bring political, economic and social life under the domain of Islam, its vague references to Islam seemed to satisfy Mawdudi. The *Jamaat-i-Islami* continues to be a political force. Up until his general retirement from public life in 1972 he was the most visible of religious leaders in Pakistan, and he was the spark for much debate on the issue of Islam and modernity.

The starting point for all of Mawdudi's thought is God, and his belief that 'there is no God but God' is more than a declaration of faith; it a proclamation of the uniqueness of God as Master, Sovereign and Law-Giver. Effectively, God alone has the right to command and to demand exclusive obedience and loyalty from Man. God alone has the right to tell Man what he must do in *all* aspects of life. Therefore, the declaration of faith is a political and moral imperative. This concept of God as Law-Giver provides the basic principle of authority. All principles, laws, customs and usages that can be shown to be contrary to the directives of God are to be spurned. Mawdudi sees the secularising state as anti-Islamic and against the will of God; for man-made laws that give no consideration to the will of the ultimate Law-Giver are, consequently, untruths and irreligious. It follows form this that any person who obeys secularised law is also being un-Islamic; the good Muslim obeys the Law of God and none other. This is crucial to Mawdudi's whole philosophy. There are two mutually opposed attitudes to life: one, of accepting God as Sovereign and Law-Giver and, therefore, Man is his servant and slave; or to abrogate to oneself or to others God's sovereignty and thus to defy and rebel against God.

Mawdudi sees Prophethood as challenging the recurring trend of denying the authority of God, of engaging in *Jahiliyya.* Islam can never become a reality unless the dominance of *Jahiliyya* is ended. Prophethood is a response to Man's need for guidance; to be brought back to the straight path. The First Man was the First Prophet and, through the process of revelation, Truth has been communicated to Man in all ages and to all races. Muhammad, as the Seal of the Prophets and the vessel of God's Law, can be referred to for this guidance. The words of God are embodied in the perfect form of the Qur'an and the example of the Perfect Man is embodied in the Sunna of the Prophet. Therefore, Man need look no further than these primary sources for Truth. Mawdudi argues that here is *all* Truth: prescriptions for all life, whether it be political, social or economic. Within these paradigms can be found sufficient legislation for the Islamic state. However, where it is found to be inadequate or silent on a particular matter then Man, as God's vicegerent, is empowered to administer the affairs of state according to the fundamental directives of God's Law. Throughout this thesis, the

words of Mawdudi on the Islamic paradigms will be used to contrast it with the Historical response.

4. Secularisation and the Nietzschean Concept of the Soul: The Historical Defined

Historical Islam is determined by the operation of religious organisations both within and outside the socio-political sphere. In other words, there is a separation between politics and religion, but the two interact. Consequently, religion does not restrict itself entirely to its pure 'doctrinal' elements, and politics is not entirely secularised in that it is only concerned with governing according to the prevailing ideology (e.g. capitalism, communism, and so on) of the time and place. Although in such circumstances the 'religious' and the 'secularised' probably have their separate place (perhaps, for example, the former concerned with aspects of social welfare and moral education, the latter with foreign policy, running the economy, and so on), the two spheres may well step on each other's toes. The reason for this conflict is due to a widely-held view that religion has every right to be involved in politics. Consequently – aware that religious organisations can become determining forces for rebellion against political authority or abuse – Historical Islam is one which accepts the legitimacy of a state provided it abides by Islamic principles. In this sense, it is important to determine what those Islamic principles *are*. In addition, the views of Nietzsche help to determine more clearly what is meant in this thesis by Historical Islam and how it is possible to identify it. In order to do this, two very important terms also need to be defined: secularisation, and Nietzsche's concept of the soul.

In terms of 'secularisation', the realm of political authority rests entirely in the hands of non-religious concerns and is legitimated according to prevailing ideology. The authority of the ruler is related to bureaucratic systems and regulated by rules and regulations in the form of a constitution (whether it be written or 'unwritten'). These systems, prevalent in Europe and America, attempt

to maintain a distinct separation between religious and political organisations, with the secularised being the accepted, dominant authority. This, of course, is not to say that the two spheres do not on occasion conflict, but that such conflict would not result in political authority being in any way threatened in its legitimacy by the challenge of religious authority.[1]

In this thesis, a preference is given for the term 'secularisation' rather than 'secular' or 'secularism'. This is because many scholars have noted that,

"...whereas the former [secularisation] implies a continuing and open-ended process in which values and world-views are continually revised in accordance with 'evolutionary' change in history, the latter [secularism], like religion, projects a closed world view and an absolute set of values in line with an ultimate historical purpose having a final significance for man. Secularism...denotes an *ideology*."[2]

If one defines 'secularism' as "the rejection of religion after secularisation"[3], then it raises the question of which society, if any, has actually achieved a condition of total secularism when they are all, it seems, still at various stages of secularisation. If we accept that, "At its minimum, secularisation means the decline of the prestige and power of religious teachers. It involves the ending of state support for religious bodies, of religious teaching in the national schools..."[4] then countries such as Britain – where religious education is still compulsory in national schools – or many states in the US – where the teaching of Creationism is compulsory – are still in the process of secularisation, but not yet 'secular'. Secularisation can also mean, "the decline of widespread interest in religious traditions, so that the religious bodies no longer attract many practising supporters or enjoy popular respect."[5] Even in so-called 'secular' societies, this level of secularisation has perhaps not yet been reached; in fact, in some cases the

[1] Of course, secularised politics is not entirely 'non-religious' either. For example, the Jewish lobby in American politics or the Christian Socialism of New Labour in the UK
[2] Al-Attas (1978) p. 17
[3] Bullock (ed.) (1988)
[4] *ibid*
[5] *ibid.*

opposite is occurring with an *increase* in the number of religious bodies and interest.[1]

It is, therefore, difficult to determine what is or is not a secular or secularised society.[2] Donald Smith[3] identified five types of secularisation process that a society can experience:

1. Polity separation secularisation. The institutional separation of religion and polity and the denial of the religious identity of the polity.

2. Polity expansion secularisation. The expansion of the political system into areas of society formerly regulated by religion.

3. Political culture secularisation. The transformation of values associated with the polity and the replacing of religious by secular notions of politics, political community and political legitimacy.

4. Political process secularisation. The decline in the political saliency of religious leaders, interest groups and issues.

5. Polity dominance secularisation. The initiation of an open governmental attack on the religious basis of general culture, and the forcible imposition of secular ideology on the political culture.

What is common to these five types is that religion is on the defensive. Society is heading towards the secular. However, as Turan points out:

"A more accurate way of looking at the relationship between religion and social life in general, and politics in particular, would be to suggest that religion affects

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[1] Interestingly, this is occurring most notably in the most 'materialist' societies, such as the United States and Japan

[2] To add to the confusion, in a 1994 interview on TV, the then leader of the Turkish Refah Party said that, "Under the pretence of secularism, they [the rulers] perpetrate aggression towards religion. The Refah Party will introduce true secularism. That is to say, freedom of religion for everyone."

[3] Smith (1974) p.8

social life (politics) very significantly in some societies, significantly in others, moderately still in others, and very little in the remainder. In the case of Muslim societies we are likely to find more societies in the first two categories. We may also note that societies change, and they move either way in the classification at a given moment in time."[1]

The above quote can be seen as either helpful or frustratingly obscure. Helpful in the sense that it recognises there are different levels of religious involvement in different societies, obscure in that we are still unable to determine at what point a state can be labelled 'secularising'. To place such a label on any society is to suggest that it is possible to predict the future of that society, that it is inevitably heading towards the secular (even if 'the secular' is an unobtainable ideal). In the same way that no so-called secular society will ever be secular, no so-called Muslim society will ever be entirely Muslim. In which case, *all* societies come under the label of 'secularisation', although in some cases, "religion affects social life very significantly" while, at the other extreme, religion affects life "very little". The conflict lies, then, with societies that perceive themselves as heading in a specific direction – either towards the secular or towards the religious – and are opposed to any forces that might question or interfere with this perceived direction. Of importance, then, is determining where this 'perception' originates.

In terms of how this informs the distinction between Historical and Transhistorical Islam, Transhistorical Islam constitutes those societies that perceive themselves to be moving towards a pure Islamic state, and therefore see any attempts at moving towards the secular as an enemy in this cause. Historical Islam, on the other hand, recognises the impossibility, or the impracticality, or the undesirability of either the two extremes of pure Islamic state, or the secular state, and seeks for something 'in-between'. In terms of Turan's distinctions, it rests, as he notes, "in the first two categories". The question that is less clear, and needs to be considered in this thesis, is which of David Smith's categories could correspond with Historical Islam.

[1] Turan (1991) p. 32

In an attempt to determine the Islamic 'soul', a Nietzschean approach to truth can act as a torch in the dark. Not, of course, the 'will to truth' that Nietzsche so forthrightly condemns as the cause of philosophy's dream state since the time of Plato; rather the truth as will to power, as what enhances the species. In *Daybreak*[1], Nietzsche drifted from the dualism of *The Birth of Tragedy*, to a form of monism; there is only *one* substance, the will to power which is the basic drive of *all* human efforts. Not only is it a psychological urge that explains forms of human behaviour, but it also detracts man from achieving greatness by engaging in the lust for money and power politics. More than that, however, the will to power can be seen in a positive light. Nietzsche saw ancient Greek society – for him the height of humanity – in terms of the will to power. It is the basic drive that resulted in the development of Greek culture for they preferred power more than anything else, more than a good reputation for example. The only thing that is 'real' is will to power. Even our conscious processes, our rational capacity, are just an expression this basic force. Therefore, all our problems are psychological ones; not metaphysical. In fact, philosophy, morality, politics, religion, science, all of culture and civilisation, can be explained in terms of our will to power. The will to power, therefore, is a unifying principle. It is realised in nature and history, in the rise and fall of great civilisations and religions, in the motive behind cultural and artistic activity. The will to power is behind all our philosophical views of the world and the impulse behind the acquisition of all kinds of knowledge. It is not, therefore, the intention to debate *whether or not* there is a God, that Muhammad did receive revelations, that the Qur'an is the genuine and pure word of God. Rather, that Muslims *do* believe in God and that Muhammad did receive revelations and the Qur'an is the word of God: it is a theological doctrine that imposes itself upon history and the Muslim psyche. Nietzsche believed in obtaining knowledge of the world through 'physics' and human nature. His views on 'physics' are those of the pre-Socratic Greeks: as rational enquiry in to the way of human beings (i.e. *physis*). Therefore, he was not a proponent of modern physics of materialistic atomism, but was concerned more with the 'psyche'; to what it *means* to be a human being.[2]

[1] Nietzsche (1982)
[2] Nietzsche (1998) Section 12, p.14,15

It is not the ambition here to attempt to establish Islam upon any firm foundation of absolute immutable truth, for we cannot speak of 'truth' in this way. This is a philosophical enterprise that acknowledges that all attempts to understand our world are ultimately a projection of ourselves upon that world, it is the "personal confession of the author"[1]. We are all placing foundations upon foundations that are already there and so our enterprise, in terms of attempting to understand the 'essence' of Islam, is to scratch away at the many layers of paint that cover its canvas and to determine its ultimate form. There is no 'one' Islam, but all 'Islams' have certain common origins. If we imagine the collective consciousness, the 'soul', of Islam as originating on a blank canvas – the very beginnings of humanity – then it is soon covered with layers of paint as representations of the beliefs and traditions that were already present in Arabia in the sixth century. The fresh layers are added with the coming of the Qur'an, with the *sunna* of Muhammad, and with the creation of Medina.

We cannot make a science out of metaphysics, for there are no truths out there, but that does not mean we cannot *have* a metaphysics. In the tradition of Wittgenstein, we can have our non-cognitive language games, for we are not in a position to assert one truth as greater than another. What matters most is whether or not a worldview is good for the species, whether it even *enhances* a species. That is to say, does an ideology – whether it be Christianity, Islam, secularism, or any other belief-system – result in mankind working in harmony with the will to power, with an appreciation that all *is* power? This, for Nietzsche, was the test and, he believed, Christianity – as understood in its institutionalised form in certain European countries during Nietzsche's time – was failing. Is Islam heading the same way? Does it have anything to say for the modern generation and does it have a place in the future, or is it another ideology that hinders 'progress', that takes us away from what it *means* to be human?

[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 6, p.9

Like Plato in the allegory of the cave, Nietzsche pictures the true philosopher, the 'risk-taker', as "turning around"[1], only with Nietzsche it is *inward*; towards one's psychological state rather than a transcendental realm of Platonic Forms. Nietzsche was not critical of a belief in the transcendental – for Nietzsche's own beliefs in the will to power border on the metaphysical – but whether such a belief causes a turning away from the human psyche.

The important question, then, is not whether Islam is 'true' or not, but whether the values that it upholds are, in the Nietzschean sense, life-enhancing ones and have a place in the modern and increasingly secularising world. For Nietzsche, 'life-enhancing' is any belief that does not look to the next life, or to some Utopian ideal for salvation. Rather, salvation is to be found in this world and this life. To assume the value of truth for human beings is to assume that there is harmony between truth and our natures; that truth is what we are naturally fitted for. For Nietzsche, truth is *deadly*. The 'truths' of the old philosophy are myths that truth is edifying and, therefore, the praise of truth as good for us has become an indispensable *lie*. However, by questioning these 'truths', the risk is that we will destroy these falsifications that have sustained human life.[2] This helps to explain why Islam becomes defensive for it is felt that secularisation does question the 'truth' of Islam. The Islamic defensiveness, expressed most obviously in forms of fundamentalism, is based on the assumption that secularisation is undermining Islam. For Islam to survive it may well go down the path of fundamentalism, of adopting the view that their worldview is essentially 'other' than the Western worldview and that they are incompatible, that secularism is Satanism.

Nietzsche attacks the "belief in the opposition of values"[3]. The fundamental prejudice of Platonism: truth cannot arise out of error, the high cannot originate in the low, and perfection must stand as the origin of all good things like truth. This dogmatism dictated that there must be two worlds: a true world of being accessible to the purified mind and an untrue world of becoming. Anyone who dares to argue that the true originated in its opposite is a fool or a criminal.

[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 1, p.5
[2] Nietzsche (1998) Section 1, p.5
[3] Nietzsche (1998) Section 2, p.6

Nietzsche, then, accepts that he is a criminal, a teacher of 'evil': that the good may be related to the evil and, even more than that, *the same thing*! *There are no opposites.*[1] For Islam to declare Western civilisation as 'evil' and vice versa is to fail to look *beyond* good and evil. Nietzsche presents a philosophical monism to replace the prejudice of two-world dualism.

Doubts about the value of belief in opposites leads Nietzsche to propose an alternative standard, life itself: "However much value we may ascribe to truth, truthfulness, or altruism, it may be that we need to attribute a higher and more fundamental value to appearance, to the will to illusion, to egoism and desire."[2] If life becomes the 'standard' then what is this 'standard'? The *preservation* of life or the *enhancement* of life? Nietzsche argues for the latter for he is moved by something more than simply a 'will to live'. This then is the test for Islam: enough that it may survive, but does it enhance?

Nietzsche considered what might *enhance* the species: that is the question of the value of truth and the possibility that the 'falseness' of a judgement is not necessarily an objection to it. 'Truth' or 'falsity' are not the ultimate criterion, but are valued according to "what extent the judgement furthers life, preserves life, preserves the species, perhaps even cultivates the species."[3] Every philosophy has been "the personal confession of its author"[4]. Great philosophy is autobiographical and Nietzsche does not exclude himself from this assertion. Nietzsche claims that the "instinct for knowledge"[5] (i.e. the will to truth) is not the "father of philosophy"[6], but that there is a more basic instinct or drive. What is this? "Every instinct is tyrannical; and as *such* seeks to philosophise."[7] Philosophies are seeking one thing: mastery, to be the ultimate purpose for all existence. This mastery is what Nietzsche means by the will to power. Philosophy today still "creates the world according to its own image, it cannot do

[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 2, p.6
[2] *ibid.*
[3] *ibid.* Section 4, p.7
[4] *ibid.* Section 6, p.9
[5] *ibid*
[6] *ibid.*
[7] *ibid*

otherwise."[1] Philosophy is the drive to the "creation of the world, to the *causa prima*"[2]. Philosophy assigns itself the role our religion assigns to God. "Philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual form of the will to power"[3]. Philosophy, therefore, is the drive to tyrannise the world, to rule the world through an interpretation of the world.

Nietzsche makes a distinction between great philosophers and "scholars". The latter is represented by the scientists who are able to distance themselves and be objective. Yet philosophy has the added bonus of being spiritual and intellectual and, therefore, has the right to rule over science. Philosophy is much more driven by the lust to rule, by tyranny, and this can be utilised for the good as well as for the bad. What is important is that it *exists*.[4] If, as Nietzsche argues, philosophy is driven by the 'lust to rule' then the defeat of this attempt at mastery can lead to malice, hence: "How malicious philosophers can be!"[5] Nietzsche considers the greatest contest in ancient philosophy: that between Plato, the heir of Socratic moralism and transcendentalism, and Epicurus, the heir of Democritus and Greek science. Epicurus' defeat resulted in the dogmatic Platonism that we are only now awakening from. After the Platonists and the Epicureans, come the Stoics: the third major school of ancient philosophy. These are moral philosophers concerned with the best human life and it leads them to believe that we should live "according to nature".[6] One of the major concerns for Nietzsche is the relation between nature and human life. However, when Nietzsche looks to nature it is "wasteful...indifferent...without purpose...without mercy and justice..."[7] For Nietzsche life is "the desire to be other than this nature"[8]. The Stoics write into nature their own morality. Nietzsche's presentation of the will to power in its 'spiritual form', as philosophy, is not a criticism of philosophy. On the contrary, it is an elevation of philosophy to the highest possible rank, to the spirited and reasoned enquiry into nature and human life, rooted in passion and

[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 9, p.11
[2] *ibid*
[3] *ibid*
[4] Nietzsche (1998) Section 6, p.9
[5] *ibid.* Section 7, p.9
[6] *ibid.* Section 9, p.10
[7] *ibid.*
[8] *ibid.*

supervised by a self-legislated intellectual conscience. It is the apex of nature, and insight into its character must be recovered if philosophy is to flourish again. Nietzsche criticises *philosophers*, not philosophy. The Stoics were noble, but deceived themselves about nature. But can we live in accord with nature as viewed as the will to power? Yes, if you recognise the cruelty of nature's indifference while striving for a new nobility that cultivates and celebrates nature.

A main theme of *Beyond Good and Evil* is that the prejudice of philosophers, their persistent will to truth, makes it almost impossible to present other perspectives, or for other perspectives to get a fair hearing. Nietzsche argues that behind this apparent desire for knowledge of the real world is really a desire to be ignorant of it, symptomatic of Kant who denies that it is possible to have knowledge of the real world and that we must therefore rely upon faith. It is because of Kant, who argued that it is not possible to *know*, that Europe returned to the quest for transcendentalism, for *God*. Nietzsche then asks the question: "Why is the belief in synthetic a priori judgements *necessary*?"[1] In answer, he says that it is a conviction that we need universal and necessary judgements about the world as a mechanism for survival of the human species. Having tied ourselves to this need for the 'will to truth', Kant then tells us that we cannot have them! However, by inventing a moral and epistemological "faculty" that humans possess, Kant prevents us from then concluding that there is no will to truth and puts such senses back to sleep with this belief that we have a "faculty".[2] However, Nietzsche argues that we awakening from this dream again, to be faced with the unsettling prospect of scientific materialism. Europe is awakening form a civilisation based upon Platonic concepts, to which Kant is a repeater of this fable.

Nietzsche was only too aware of the dangers that confronted the Europe of his time; of the loss of faith and the resort to a kind of 'scientific materialism'. It is arguable that Europe is even more in the grip of a kind of 'crude atomism', of a loss of faith, of the kind of spirit he perceived amongst the pre-Socratic Greeks, and clinging to empiricism and science in the hope that it can give us meaning to

[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 11, p.13
[2] *ibid.*

life. But Nietzsche rightly notes that such disciplines cannot provide a 'philosophy' for they have no spirit. If, indeed, Islam were the enemy of the West, then it would be against science and the pursuit of knowledge as in opposition to faith, but this is by no means the case. In fact, Muslim scholars took to heart the passage from the Qur'an that states: "Allah will exalt by many degrees those among you who have attained faith and those who have been given knowledge."[1] As one notable scholar, Abu Bakr. B. 'Abd al-Rahman b. al-Harith (d. 712), put it, the purpose of knowledge was to gain honour, to strengthen one's faith and to win favour with the ruling Caliph in order to serve him.[2]

Nietzsche praises the scientists Boscovich and Copernicus because, while they rejected the evidence of the senses as reliable, they did not resort to creating a 'real' world as the only possible source of knowledge. Modern cosmology, physics and biology are seen as weapons against Plato's transcendentalism. This science, especially with its views on human nature, is able to "declare war, a relentless war to the death"[3] against relics of materialistic atomism, especially Christian "soul atomism"[4]. However, although we should make war against the idea of individual eternal souls, it is not necessary to get rid of the soul altogether. Rather, we need to introduce a new concept of "mortal soul", "soul as subject-multiplicity" and "soul as social structure of the drives and effects"[5]. The science of psyche can make actual discoveries that are both dangerous and promising: it is the voyage of a new Odysseus who risks the danger of shipwreck for the hope of a whole new continent of discoveries.[6]

In a reference to Descartes ("I think") and Schopenhauer ("I will"), Nietzsche declares that there are no "immediate certainties"[7]. These philosophers are largely "harmless scrutinizers" because they assert philosophically what the populace already believe they know anyway. The *true philosopher*, however, has a

[1] Qur'an 58:11
[2] Waines (1995) p.37
[3] Nietzsche (1998) Section 12, p.14
[4] *ibid*
[5] *ibid*
[6] *ibid*
[7] *ibid* Section 16, p.16

responsibility to question, to be sceptical. The quest for certainty is not a metaphysical one that pampers to the masses, but a matter of "physio-psychology"[1] that may provide answers that will not be popular. What the populace want from philosophy is not truth but certainty.

Islam is not only a religion, an ideology, a worldview, but it is a language. Arabic, even though not understood by the majority of believers, is central to Islam and the Qur'an, as the language of God and of Muhammad. The great families of languages are as formative for philosophy as continents are for the evolutions of animals or suns for orbiting planets. The closer that cultures come to sharing a common language, then the closer will be their world-view. Can philosophy, then, ever escape and achieve a perspective that is independent of language? Nietzsche seems to suggest a means to such a liberation in a way not unlike Plato when he says, "In truth their [philosopher] thinking is much less an act of discovery than an act of recognising anew, remembering anew, a return back home to a distant, ancient universal economy of the soul from out of which these concepts initially grew."[2] Philosophical thinking is recollection, but with a *natural* (not metaphysical) basis: a genealogy, a recovery in consciousness of what is written unaware in the human soul by the collective, formative experiences of our species. This is what Nietzsche means by 'soul'; very unlike the Platonic 'soul'. "Philosophising is thus a kind of atavism of the highest order"[3]. We need, therefore, to be liberated from our grammar but, also, from the "spell of physiological value judgements and conditions of race"[4]. Nietzsche's attack on Locke's view of the empty mind (*tabula rasa*) and the irrelevance of language is a defence of a kind of innateness, but this 'innateness' is not timeless and universal, rather it is the physiological and linguistic predispositions of our species that the new philosophy must bring to conscious awareness.[5] By being aware, we can begin to be free and so the primary task of philosophy is a matter of *physio-psychology*. This point is crucial for this study: to look for the 'soul' of Islam not

[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 23, p.23
[2] *ibid* Section 20, p.20
[3] *ibid*
[4] *ibid*
[5] *ibid.*, p.21

as a series of transcendental, unchanging truths, but as a series of physiological and linguistic propositions: the physiological in the sense of the Arabic world (the cradle of Islam), and the linguistic in the sense of the Qur'an.

Philosophy, like all branches of thought – including, Nietzsche believes, science – is not, or should not, be in the business of merely presenting facts, but of *interpreting*. The physicists see nature as law-abiding, as democratic and egalitarian. But this is just an interpretation - a prejudice of the physicist - to fit in with a political and philosophical trend for democracy and equality, whereas "someone else" could come along and see nature as "ruthlessly tyrannical".[1] This "someone else" is still an interpreter who must also employ the limitations of language, although they can at best only be metaphors for what nature is: the will to power.

If we accept that our 'truths' are merely the prejudices of philosophers, then we are led to scepticism. However, Nietzsche believes that there is a role for the genuine philosopher, and this involves a 'free spirit' that goes beyond scepticism and involves a new insight into nature. This leads to a new philosophy, a new 'religion' that also entails a new morality and politics. Islam need not respond to Westernisation as if it were cold and materialist and, likewise, the West need not respond to Islam as if it were incapable of being philosophical or critical or, for that matter, truly 'spiritual'.

Nietzsche does not doubt that the world is a series of fictions. However this should not lead to the conclusion that there is a "deceptive principle in the 'nature of things'" (Plato) or that it is a fault of the "intellect", the "thought process itself" (Kant).[2] We need to go further than this and distrust "all thinking itself" because thinking itself falsifies. We can't have a "faith in immediate certainties". The philosopher has to get away from a belief in the opposition between true and false, and suggests "degrees of apparency". The world is like a painting with "light and dark shadows and hues of appearance", but there is no one 'painter'; *that itself* is a

[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 22, p.22
[2] *ibid.* Section 34, p.34

fiction.[1] Islam is to be seen as the performance of an *activity*. Truth, instead of a quality that is present or absent from the Islamic belief, is rather an activity which is performed or not performed. In this respect, an action cannot be 'true' or 'false', but it can be appropriate or inappropriate according to the *context* in which it is executed. Context throughout this study is paramount. To treat Islam as a static, universal ideology is to sign its death warrant. To see it as possessing a series of principles that are conducive to not only Islamic, but non-Islamic and, indeed, non-religious humanity is both preferable and perfectly *appropriate*.

This sense of 'innateness', of a 'soul' that is physio-psychological, is how the Historical should be understood. Islam has a 'soul', an 'innateness' that shapes and re-shapes historical Islam. Nietzsche argues that philosophical concepts (such as 'I think' or 'free will') do not evolve autonomously, but as fragments within a broader perspective, like the fauna of continents in which each species evolves in ways dictated by local conditions. It is not a question of whether or not Islam *can* be liberated from this essence but whether it *wants* to be and, if it did not want to, whether it would still be recognisable as 'Islam' any more than evolved Man can be described as primeval slime. Islam, in this process of self-criticism and reform, is not 'changing' so much as, in the Nietzschean sense, 'recollecting', as "an act of recognising anew, remembering anew, a return back home to a distant, ancient universal economy of the soul."[2] That is why it is so important to identify those particular strands of Islam that existed in its paradigmatic state, in its 'Golden Age'.

5. 'Islam' and 'Muslim' Defined

There has been much theoretical discussion on what constitutes an Islamic State; discussions that may well go back to the very beginnings of Islam. In the Western world, an awareness of this dialogue is obviously a much more recent phenomenon. However, Western colonialism has resulted in Islam going on the

[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 34, p.34
[2] *ibid.* Section 20, p.20

defensive (and, more recently still, the offensive) in the face of the power of Western modernism.[1] Indeed, barely has Islam begun to address this attack, than it is coming within the postmodern dialogue.[2] The concept of an Islamic state raises a series of questions, not least of which is what do we mean by Islam? This is a complicated enough question, of great concern to many notable scholars:

"...Not only have we not spoken enough about our ideologies, our school of thought and our religion, but we have not really spoken about it at all. How can we say that we know our sufferings and have talked about them enough and that now it is the time for action? We are a religious society. Our religion should be the basis of our science, but we do not even know our religion as yet."[3]

Thus there is a need to have a "religious society" and yet there is confusion over what "religious" means in the Islamic sense. Added to this, one must be wary of perceiving Islam in any singular manner. Despite the Islamic essence of the *umma* the allowance for diversity is also an essential tenet. In a geographical sense at least it is not a monolith but a collection of differing cultures influenced by their own set of local customs and economical-political aspects.

In attempting to conceptualize the Islamic state there must exist an Islamic ideology. But what *is* Islamic ideology? Can we actually talk about Islamic ideology as a purely Islamic phenomenon with its own complete system of sociological, political, economic and theological systems that requires no reference whatsoever to Western systems? What role is there for the 'secularisation process'? Can there be a separation between the Temporal and the Spiritual, or does the Islamic State imply a theocracy?

Traditionally, it is considered that the Prophet made no distinction between the religious and the secular. When the Muslim speaks of authority, God is

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[1] O.E.D. (1993), the term 'modernism' is defined theologically as "A movement towards modifying traditional beliefs and doctrines in accordance with modern ideas..." This is how I apply the term.
[2] Most notably, Akbar Ahmed (1992) who states that, "To approach an understanding of the postmodernist age is to presuppose a questioning of the loss of faith in the project of modernity; a spirit of pluralism; a heightened scepticism of traditional orthodoxy; and finally a rejection of a view of the world as a universal totality, of the expectation of final solutions and complete answers." p. 10
[3] Shariati (1980) pp. 12,13

sovereign. When the Muslim speaks of law, he speaks of God's Will. On this purely theological basis, many commentators have felt very comfortable in their beliefs. When approaching the subject of a social ethic, the Islamic scholars have often come across as frightened traditionalists.

Within the contemporary intellectual landscape of Islamic studies we find varying points of view amongst Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. These viewpoints frequently fall into often-used categories such as 'traditionalist', 'fundamentalist', 'modernist', and 'secularist'. If used at all, such terms should be used carefully, as they often overlap and only result in more confusion. What this does go to show is that there are specific ideas as to what it means to be a Muslim (or, for that matter, a non-Muslim) and what role - if any - there should be for Islam with reference to social institutions and social issues.

Dialogue on the status of an Islamic state has tended to revolve around two poles: a state where the people are sovereign on the one side; a state where God is sovereign on the other. However, as it has already been shown, in between these two poles are a variety of shades of one or the other. The controversy over the Islamic state is articulated in the context of the process of modernisation which - whether approved or not - is transforming the traditional properties of all societies. The cradle of this modernisation is essentially Western and so the implications for 'traditional' culture within Western society[1] are perhaps not so devastating, for Western society has had a good few hundred years to adapt.[2] The same, however, cannot be said for Islam where the 'threat' of modernity, if that is how it is perceived, is happening far more quickly.

It is correct to say that Arabs only make up about one-fifth of the total world Muslim population, and even the whole of the Middle East (in its broadest sense of encompassing the whole of the Arab world from Morocco to the Arabian

[1] Of course, Japan – not so long ago a 'traditional' culture itself – is now at the forefront of this modernisation process, although the question of how it might affect the Japanese 'psyche' in the long term has yet to be determined.

[2] Although one might consider that a 'new modernity' or 'postmodernity' is *potentially* as devastating for Europe as was the Enlightenment.

Peninsula, including also Iran, Israel and Turkey) would only be one-third of the world's Muslim population. However, being a minority in terms of numbers has no relevance with influence in terms of ideology. Muslims, it must be remembered, all face towards the Ka'ba in Mecca for prayer, and pilgrimage to Mecca, the Hajj, is a ritual obligation for all Muslims. The three holiest cities, Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem, are all in the Middle East. Jerusalem was also the first *qibla* (the direction Muslims face when praying). Two other holy cities, especially venerated by Shi'a Muslims, are in the Middle East: Najaf, where the fourth Caliph, Ali, is meant to be buried, and Karbala, which witnessed the martyrdom of Ali's son, Husayn. Also, the formative years of political Islam are solidly embedded in a Middle Eastern geographic context: Damascus and Baghdad are to Muslims what Rome and Constantinople are to Christians, only more so. Many of the later imperial and cultural capitals of Islam rest in the Middle East, including Cairo, Istanbul and Isfahan.

Therefore, although it may possess a minority of the Muslim population, the impact of the Middle East upon the 'physio-psychological soul' of the Muslim in, say, Indonesia is immense, especially when also stressing that the importance of Arabic as a language. Although it is true to say that Islam in Arabia differs greatly from, for example, Islam in Eastern Europe, there are, nonetheless, common factors that bind. This work is defining a Muslim as one who believes in God, in a metaphysical reality, in natural law. Such a definition may well exclude certain Muslims, for example so-called 'nominal Muslims' or 'cultural Muslims', whereby identity is determined by being born to a Muslim father, much like a Jew born to a Jewish mother. Other than that, it is not required to subscribe to beliefs (*iman*) and practices (*islam*) of the faith; rather it is a matter of ethnicity or group allegiance. A modern example of this is Bosnia, where a person is described (or describes him/herself) as a Bosnian Muslim to be distinguished from Bosnian Serbs (Orthodox) and Bosnian Croats (Catholic). Other than that, the Bosnian Muslims are, "Drinkers of slivovitz, strong plum brandy, eaters of pork, for many Bosnian Muslims their only connections with Islam until the [Bosnian] war were that they had names like Amra and Emir and left their shoes outside their houses. Bosnian Muslims were largely secular and those that were religious emphasised

that they were 'European Muslims', something quite different to the Ayatollahs of Iran and the Islamic clergy of Saudi Arabia."[1] It is not surprising that the Muslims from Saudi Arabia and Algeria that went to Bosnia to fight were shocked by Bosnians' lifestyle, and equally the Bosnians themselves were not attracted to the orthodoxy of the *Mujahidin*.

However, while recognising the diversity that is Islam, it is not the 'atheist Muslim' that is of concern here but the 'primary Muslims': those that, at the very least, believe in God and a metaphysical 'other'. It is the belief that 'there is no god but God' and that the prophets have set down the duty to submit to God. This declaration and worship are called *tawhid*; the assertion of God's unity. For the 'primary Muslim', religion is a vital force and a duty. The concept of unity in diversity allows for Islam to embrace a variety of differing cultures and beliefs within a broad umbrella term. To this extent, it is difficult to provide a definition of what Islam is in its essentials; especially when even such seemingly non-controversial definitions of 'Muslim' as one who believes in the one God can be contested. This thesis, therefore, is focused upon Islam as an Arabic phenomenon, first and foremost, whilst recognising the more immediate cultural, religious, philosophical and political influence of the Middle East upon Arabic Islam and also being aware of the influence of greater geographical boundaries, *including* that of Europe.

[1] Lebor (1997) p.20

Chapter Three

Nietzsche's Religiosity

"I have a terrible fear I shall one day be pronounced holy...I do not want to be a saint, rather even a buffoon."

- Nietzsche, Why I Am Destiny 1, Ecce Homo[1]

"May your name be holy to future generations"

- Peter Gast at Nietzsche's funeral.[2]

An important premise for this work is that Nietzsche has important things to say about religion. Secondly, that Nietzsche has his own 'religiosity' that stems from his deep understanding of religious belief. Thirdly, that although he wrote little about Islam, his attack upon Christianity is particularly relevant to the crisis of modernity facing Islam. In this latter respect, Nietzsche's philosophy is perhaps even more relevant and urgent for Islam than it is for Christianity in that Nietzsche is essentially a product of the German Reformation and Islam, as will be argued, is at the point of its own 'Reformation'.

Tertullian was noted for his hostility towards the incursion of philosophy into theology. Philosophy, he held, was pagan in its outlook, and its intrusion into theology could only lead to heresy within the church. In his *de praescriptione haereticorum* (*'On the Rule of the Heretics'*) the one-time pagan famously asked the question: "What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem? between the Academy and church?"[3] To an even greater extent than the Christian tradition, Islam has been suspicious of philosophy, of the uneasy relationship between *Falsafah* (philosophy) and *Kalam* (which can be broadly translated as 'theology'), for what has Athens to do with Mecca? The assumption is made that philosophy does make a valuable contribution to theological issues, and this will

[1] Nietzsche (1979) p.126
[2] Quoted by Michael Tanner (1994) p. 60
[3] McGrath (1995) p.5

become evident in this thesis; although one hardly needs this thesis to support such an assumption. However, the more pertinent question must be justified: What has *Nietzsche* to do with Islam?

1. Redeeming Nietzsche

It is certainly not the intention here to declare Nietzsche 'holy', despite his friend Peter Gast's request or the trend since Nietzsche's death amongst many to canonise the German philosopher. What is argued here is that Nietzsche's primary philosophical aim is not that far removed from what the American theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965) considered the aim of theology, that is to deal with what he called "ultimate concern"[1]. For Tillich, existential questions are thrown up and revealed by human culture. Modern philosophy, literature, and the other creative arts point to questions which concern humans. Theology then formulates answers to these questions, and then correlates the gospel teachings to that of modern culture. The gospel must speak to culture, and it can do so only if the questions that are raised by culture are heard. Such a view of religion, as dealing with "ultimate concern" need not limit itself to liberal Protestantism or, for that matter, Christianity. Can we talk of Islam as also being concerned with matters of "ultimate concern"?

Tillich's conception of religion has suffered considerable criticism, of course. His apologetic liberalism has been seen by many theologians as placing too great an emphasis upon transient cultural developments, with the consequence that it often appears to be uncritically driven by the forces of secularisation. Even if it is the case that Tillich is a symptom of the secular agenda, rather than being independent of it, his views are important here to the degree that he is at least prepared to address the problem of secularisation. It is important for this thesis because Islam also is now confronted by the forces of secularisation and, likewise, attempts by Islamic scholars to respond positively to this growing force – a force

[1] Tillich (1951) p. 60

that will not go away – are frequently rebuffed by orthodox Muslim scholars as being too 'apologetic'.

This is not a work of apologetics and nor are the views of the Muslim scholars that are focussed upon. It is, rather, a bid to address the fundamental question of religion, to get at the heart of what religion is here for, to get at its "ultimate concern" and this is also where Nietzsche comes in. A quote from Tillich at this point will highlight Nietzsche's relevance to the debate:

"The answers implied in the event of revelation are meaningful only in so far as they are in correlation with questions concerning the whole of our existence, with existential questions. Only those who have experienced the shock of transitoriness, the anxiety in which they are aware of their finitude, the threat of nonbeing, can understand what the notion of God means. Only those who have experienced the tragic ambiguities of our historical existence and have totally questioned the meaning of existence can understand what the symbol of the Kingdom of God means."[1]

Many have experienced the "shock of transitoriness", the "threat of nonbeing" and so on, but Nietzsche took such human experiences to their very limits. Further, Nietzsche realised the importance of culture, of the creative arts as expressions of what it is to be human. More than this, however, is his *religious* concern; with, in Tillich terms, what is *ultimate*. For Nietzsche, religion is the highest form of art. He is concerned with the human situation, with the very fact that humans exist in the world. As Tillich points out:

"The analysis of existence, including the development of the questions implicit in existence, is a philosophical task, even if it is performed by a theologian, and even if the theologian is a reformer like Calvin."[2]

Yet it might strike the reader as curious that Nietzsche, the 'great atheist', should be recruited to defend religion. Nietzsche is still, however, in the process of being better understood as scholars brush away the dust of many years of misunderstanding. It is in the light of more recent scholarship that this thesis can call Nietzsche a 'religious' man of the highest order. There have certainly been a

[1] Tillich (1951) p.61
[2] *ibid.* p.62

number of intimations of this in the past, for example Heidegger who called him "that passionate seeker after God and the last German philosopher"[1], or, more recently, Erich Heller who says of him that, "He is, by the very texture of his soul and mind, one of the most radically religious natures that the nineteenth century brought forth..."[2]

An example of a 'Nietzschean Christian' is the Lutheran Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45). In 1943, Bonhoeffer was arrested by the Gestapo for his alleged involvement in a plot against Adolf Hitler. During the eighteen months that he was imprisoned in Berlin's Tegel prison, he wrote his *Letters and Papers from Prison*[3], in which he reflected on the question of the identity of Jesus Christ within the cultural situation of the modern world, and argued for a 'religionless Christianity': "We are moving towards a completely religionless time; people as they are now simply cannot be religious any more."[4] Bonhoeffer, a keen Nietzsche reader, saw in his phrase 'beyond good and evil' an approach to ethics that he believed was central to Protestant theology:

"The Christian gospel stands beyond good and evil. Nor could it be otherwise; for, were the grace of God to be subordinated to human criteria of good and evil, this would establish a human claim on God incompatible with the uniqueness of God's power and honour."[5]

For Bonhoeffer, the free spirit that is the *Übermensch* is similar to the freedom of the Christian, with Christ as the paradigm. Nietzsche himself made a clear distinction between Christianity and the figure of Christ, the latter he regarded as a 'higher man' who questioned the morals of his time. Jesus, according to Nietzsche, challenged priestly authority and attacked the 'Jewish church' as a corrupt and self-preserving organisation whose theology was geared to enhance its own power, whereas the message Jesus decreed was that the kingdom of heaven not some distant possibility, but rather a *present reality*:

[1] Heidegger (1985)
[2] Heller (1988) p. 11
[3] Bonhoeffer (1971)
[4] *ibid.* p.279
[5] Bonhoeffer (1970) p. 37

"What are the 'glad tidings'? True life, eternal life is found – it is not promised, it is here, it is within you: as life lived in love, in love without deduction or exclusion, without distance."[1]

The real architect of Christianity is not Jesus, but St.Paul. Whereas Nietzsche is keen to find in Jesus a kindred spirit, Paul represents all that Nietzsche despises in Christianity:

"On the heels of the 'glad tidings' came the *worst of all*: those of Paul. In Paul was embodied the antithetical type to the 'bringer of glad tidings', the genius of hatred, of the vision of hatred, of the inexorable logic of hatred. *What* did this dysangelist not sacrifice to his hatred! The redeemer above all: he nailed him to *his* Cross. The life, the example, the teaching, the death, the meaning and the right of the entire Gospel – nothing was left once this hate-obsessed false-coiner had grasped what alone he could make use of."[2]

It should be noted at this point, incidentally, that Nietzsche regarded Muhammad similarly.[3] However, keeping to Christianity at present, Bonhoeffer considers the very essence of Lutheranism to be salvation through freedom, and that this salvation is only possible 'beyond good and evil'; that is, beyond the delusions of ethical self-righteousness. In the same way as Nietzsche, Bonhoeffer believed that all ethics (including what is called Christian ethics) to be dangerous corruptions that take us away from God: that which is beyond good and evil: "The knowledge of good and evil shows that he [humanity] is no longer one with his origin."[4] In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche recounts the history of Israel that begins when it "stood in a correct, that is to say natural relationship to all things. Their Yahweh was the expression of their consciousness of power, of their delight in themselves, their hopes of themselves..."[5] However, the 'fall' occurred when they "altered the conception"[6] of their God and turned Him into "the God of justice"[7]. Therefore, both Nietzsche and Bonhoeffer conceive of 'salvation' as a reversal of this moral 'fall' and a return to a time beyond good and evil.

[1] Nietzsche (1968a) Section 29, p. 141
[2] Nietzsche (1968a) Section 42, pp. 154-5
[3] See Kaufmann (1974) p.402n.
[4] Bonhoeffer (1970) p. 37
[5] Nietzsche (1968a) Section 25, p. 135
[6] *ibid*
[7] *ibid*

Bonhoeffer's 'religionless Christianity' should not be confused with Karl Barth's phrase 'the abolition of religion'[1] Bonhoeffer directed his criticisms against forms of Christianity based on the assumption that human beings were naturally religious; an assumption that Bonhoeffer considered unsustainable, given the increase in the secularism of his time. A "religionless Christianity" is a faith which is based not on the view that humans are naturally religious, but rather upon God's self-revelation in Christ. An appeal to metaphysics especially was to be avoided as it led to a distorted concept of God. For both Nietzsche and Bonhoeffer, metaphysics degrades and disparages life on this earth because it attempts to locate human value in a realm beyond earth. This is Nietzsche's 'Platonism for the masses', a phrase particularly significant to this thesis. Nietzsche, of course, argued that Christianity is responsible for the emphasis on the metaphysical realm. However, Bonhoeffer believes Nietzsche has misunderstood Christianity here:

"It is not with the beyond that we are concerned, but with this world as created and preserved, subjected to laws, reconciled, and restored. What is above this world is, in the gospel, intended to exist *for* this world; I mean that, not in the anthropological sense of liberal, mystic pietistic, ethical theology, but in the biblical sense of the creation and of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ."[2]

Mention has already been made of the Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968), and he is relevant in this context here for the undoubted influence of Nietzsche upon his theology. Barth's contribution, developed in the second edition of his *Roemerbrief* (1921), was to reject the possibility of human knowledge of God. God is so completely 'other' that any attempt to know God is destined to failure. Knowledge of God is only possible by a miracle. In a lecture of 1916 entitled *The Righteousness of God*, Barth stated that human religiosity was little more than a Tower of Babel; a purely human construction erected in defiance of God. Religion, for Barth, is an obstacle which has to be eliminated if God is to be discerned in Christ. Barth does not go so far as to declare the death of God, and the ambiguity of the German word for 'abolition' (*Aufhebung*, which

[1] see below
[2] Bonhoeffer (1971) p.286

has two root meanings: 'to remove' and 'to exalt'), as well as Barth's mellowing with age, points towards a more 'neutral' view of 'religion' than a negative one. Nonetheless, like Bonhoeffer, his writings can be seen as a theological response to the crisis of faith that Nietzsche propounded.

In *Redeeming Nietzsche*, Giles Fraser argues that Nietzsche is "obsessed with the question of human salvation"[1] and that his writings are "a series of experiments in redemption. That is, Nietzsche's work is primarily soteriology: experiments to design a form of redemption that would work for a post-theistic age."[2] In fact, Fraser concludes that these experiments fail but, nonetheless, this is such an interesting and highly relevant work it is important to summarise its main arguments here.

Fraser begins by tracing early appropriations of Nietzsche's 'religiosity', quoting Steven Aschheim who says that some of these attempts had "a crackpot, fringe quality about them"[3]. It is unclear which of these appropriations are "crackpot", as Fraser then goes on to cite examples such as the Protestant pastor of Bremen Albert Kalthoff (1850-1906) who gave a series of 'Zarathustra Sermons' in which he contrasted a Nietzschean Christianity that is life-affirming with an analysis of the sterile and life-denying theology of the Church. He quotes Kalthoff when he presents a vision of the world "in which everything unloving, unfree, dying, weakly and sick in man is eliminated"[4]. Fraser, however, is quick to condemn Kalthoff for using "such clearly eugenic language" which "weakened the capacity of Christianity to resist the holocaust which was to come."[5] This criticism is curious as it logically follows that as Kalthoff is using Nietzschean language, then Nietzsche must likewise be accused of using "eugenic language" and must also be blamed to some extent for Nazi atrocities. Further, Fraser describes "Nietzscheanised Christianity" as an attempt at "re-invigorating what they

1 Bonhoeffer (1971) p. 2
2 *ibid.*
3 Fraser (2002) p.3, quote from Aschheim (1992) p. 202
4 *ibid* p.3, quote from Aschheim (1992) p. 208
5 *ibid* p.3

perceived as a religion in decline"[1] which suggests that Fraser is assuming here that these attempts are entirely misguided.

After an account of the influence of Nietzsche on Bonhoeffer and Barth, Fraser then explores the 'death of God' theologians, notably Thomas Altizer. Altizer developed "the idea of the kenotic, self-emptying God; a God who transcends His transcendence by becoming wholly immanent in the person of Jesus."[2] Thus, the 'death of God' is when the transcendent is self-annihilated and then reborn with human beings in the person of Jesus. Fraser rightly points that this theology, apart from the phrase 'death of God' bears little relation to Nietzsche's philosophy, and is rather more the influence of Hegel and Blake. In terms of this thesis, however, the more conservative theologians, such as Eberhard Jüngel and Helmut Thielicke, are more relevant in their response to Nietzsche's philosophy in that they recognise that there is a theological crisis and that Nietzsche should be appreciated for bringing this to our attention: a recognition that the traditional view of God, the God of the metaphysicians, is no longer viable and that this should lead to a more personal concept, specifically through the person of Jesus Christ. Nietzsche's attack on God, then, is really an attack on metaphysics. This raises the important question of whether religion can really be a religion without metaphysics – an important point that is just as relevant for Islam of course – and also whether Nietzsche was really against metaphysics. Fraser is right that theologians such as Jüngel have misread Nietzsche by actually reading Heidegger's writings on Nietzsche and:

"Consequently the 'theological' Nietzsche is very often the Heideggerian Nietzsche: the problem being that it is now generally accepted that Heidegger's Nietzsche, specifically the lecture series Heidegger gave in the late 1930s and the subsequent four-volume work on Nietzsche, is a great deal more about Heidegger than it is about Nietzsche."[3]

A more accurate reading of Nietzsche is, in fact, that he is attacking Christianity with at least two prongs. First of all, that its metaphysics is degenerate and results

[1] *ibid* p.3, quote from Aschheim (1992) p. 208
[2] *ibid* p 10
[3] Fraser (2002) p.15

in corrupt and corrupting values. The second prong, however, is the inability of Christianity to present a fresh and life-affirming outlook. By agreeing with Nietzsche that the traditional, metaphysical God is no longer viable, theologians are actually impaling themselves on Nietzsche's second prong. Nietzsche is not attacking metaphysics as such, but rather how it is used. Likewise, he sees nothing life-affirming about a philosophy or theology that is so negative, so 'a-theism' in its outlook. In terms of the crisis facing Islam, there is much that can be learnt from the Christian response to Nietzsche in this respect. Fraser notes that the Heideggerian concept of Nietzsche began to break under the pressure of those who read him as a forerunner to deconstruction, for example Derrida:

"It is important in this context to take Heidegger's Nietzsche and show that there are other possibilities in Nietzsche which are not programmed by a history of metaphysics, that there are moves which are stronger, which go further than what Heidegger calls the history of the completion of metaphysics: moves which actually put in question Heidegger himself: his reading of Nietzsche in particular and his philosophical orientation in general."[1]

While Heidegger criticised Nietzsche because of his perceived attempt to destroy metaphysics while failing to be non-metaphysical himself, deconstructionists such as Derrida see these internal contradictions central to Nietzsche's critical discourse. For Nietzsche, the problem with metaphysicians is that the "fundamental belief is *the belief in the opposition of values*...For may there not be doubt, first of all, whether opposites even exist...?"[2] It is not, then, a direct attack on metaphysics so much as the *consequences* of metaphysics. The deconstructionist, then, breaks down the faith in antithetical values in order to liberate. In theological terms, we have Mark Taylor's 'a/theology' in which the '/' is "a permeable membrane [which] forms a border where fixed boundaries disintegrate. Along this boundary the traditional polarities between which Western theology has been suspended are inverted and subverted."[3] Taylor describes deconstruction as the "hermeneutic" of the 'death of God', with his a/theology for those who are "suspended between the loss of old certainties and the discovery of new beliefs, these marginal people constantly live on the border

[1] Derrida (1994) p.26
[2] Nietzsche (1998) Section 2, p.6
[3] Taylor (1984) pp. 12-13

that joins and separates belief and unbelief."[1] If we apply this to the Muslim psyche, we have an Islamic a/theology for the post-modern world which is not torn by the seeming 'otherness' of the secular, but rather does not recognise an opposition between religious and secular. The problem does, then, become an existential one in that the believer has to accommodate his beliefs within this on this "border" that Taylor refers to. Such a predicament can be seen in negative terms, leading to a 'death of God' theology or, in Nietzschean terms, as liberating.

The difficulty seems to be in having a belief in God and, therefore, a metaphysical commitment, while also not believing in antithetical values. Is this possible? Nietzsche is concerned that the consequences of a metaphysical belief are that it is corrupting, in that the individual lives in one world while craving the hereafter.[2] However, the very fact that a common criticism levelled against Nietzsche is that he presents a metaphysics of his own suggests that he does not see it as necessarily corrupting. Again, the importance is whether a belief is life-affirming, not whether it is 'metaphysical' or not. Nietzsche's 'metaphysics' rests in his deep monism, but he also plays with opposites as part of his process of critical discourse, not unlike a form of Socratic dialectic. This is part and parcel of Nietzsche's provocative, playful writing style: attacking opposites whilst using opposites, attacking metaphysics while introducing his own metaphysics. As Jaspers notes, "self-contradiction is the fundamental ingredient in Nietzsche's thought."[3] Further, Maudemarie Clark observes that, "Nietzsche's apparent nihilism in regard to truth thus threatens the coherence of his critique of morality, and of his entire philosophy – in so far as the latter commits Nietzsche to certain truths while at the same time it denies that there are any truths."[4] One can sense Clark's frustration here, but Nietzsche is the first to admit that, "This thinker needs no one to refute him: he does that for himself."[5] Nietzsche was therefore aware of his contradictions, and they are too frequent to suppose they are accidental. Rather, it is a part of his project, his style of philosophising.

[1] Taylor (1984) pp. 12-13
[2] Nietzsche (1998) Section 2, p.6
[3] Jaspers (1965) p 10
[4] Clark (1990) p.4
[5] Nietzsche (1986) 37

Fraser acknowledges that any approach to understanding Nietzsche needs to take account of his style and that any attempt at reductionism, to seek to determine his 'philosophy' separate from his style, would be to misunderstand Nietzsche's project. In particular his constant use of Christian imagery, ideas and concepts, as well as the gospel style adopted in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, indicates a certain religiosity, which leads Fraser to address his purpose:

"I will want to argue that Nietzsche's atheism is not *premised*, either intellectually or emotionally, upon a denial of the existence of God. This is not to say I believe Nietzsche did after all believe in God. Clearly he didn't. Nietzsche was unquestionably an atheist – my question is going to be: of what sort?"[1]

What does Fraser mean by what "sort" of atheist? Fraser notes that early Christians were persecuted in Rome because they did not worship the Roman gods and, therefore, declared *atheoi*, the deniers of the gods. Likewise, he notes that Nietzsche declared himself to be a devotee of the god Dionysus. However this 'discipleship' is difficult to define for whereas Nietzsche could not quite bring himself to the point of becoming an idealist, for whom there is no world outside of the mind, neither could he entirely commit himself to phenomenalism, believing that whatever is finally meaningful can be expressed in terms of our own experience. In this respect, Nietzsche does not differ from Kant or Spinoza, in that there is a world left over, but a world of blackness and incomprehensibility: a world without distinctions.[2] Here Nietzsche is accepting of the limitations of language for, if there is such a world, we can not sensibly say anything about it. The best we can do is use the language of riddles and paradoxes, which Nietzsche does so frequently and cleverly:

"...I believe sometimes that his frenzied employment of poetic diction, his intentionally paradoxical utterances, and his deliberately perverted use of terms might be taken in the spirit of the Zen *koan*, calculated to crack the shell which linguistic habit has erected between ourselves and to expose us to open seas...At best or, if you wish, at worst, Nietzsche's view of the world verges on a mystical, ineffable vision of a primal, undifferentiated *Ur-Eine*, a Dionysiac depth"[3]

[1] Fraser (2002) p.22
[2] Danto (1980) p.96
[3] *ibid.* p.97

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche articulates a version of Schopenhauer's appearance/reality distinction. Apollo is the divinity of appearances, so Nietzsche explains that, "we might apply to Apollo the words of Schopenhauer when he speaks of the man wrapped in the veil of *māyā*."[1] Dionysus, on the other hand, represents the ability to puncture mere appearances and to lead one into communion with ultimate reality. As Paul De Man notes:

"There is little difficulty in matching the two mythological poles, Dionysus and Apollo, with the categories of appearance [i.e. 'phenomenon'] and its antithesis [the 'noumenal']...From its first characterisation as dream, Apollo exists entirely within the world of appearances. The dream...is mere surface. This state of illusion happens to coincide with what is usually called 'reality' in everyday speech, the empirical reality in which we live...All appearances, as the concept implies, is appearance of something that, in the last analysis, no longer seems to be but actually is. This something can only be Dionysus...the origin of things. As such, the Dionysian condition is an insight into things as they are...The Apollonian appearance is the metaphorical statement of this truth."[2]

Dionysus was one of the most popular Greek gods, and the festivals at which he was celebrated were characterised by drinking, frenzied dancing and collective hysteria. In Dionysus the irrational was celebrated and enacted. Giles Fraser argues that Nietzsche's invocation of Dionysus is, on one level, an echo of Schopenhauer's desire to liberate the individual from individuation. In the Dionysian frenzy, the participants experience an intoxicated reality, a form of salvation that Fraser compares with modern culture of the taking of the drug 'ecstasy' or within the Christian charismatic movements such as the Toronto Blessing.[3] In this respect, Nietzsche places Dionysus at the centre of a soteriological drama.

By 'atheist', then, Fraser does not mean someone who has no religious belief. Of crucial importance to this study is Fraser's assertion that Nietzsche's 'atheism' follows the instincts of his Lutheran Pietistic upbringing. Nietzsche is not so much concerned with the philosophical question of 'Does God exist?', but rather with 'How are we saved?' Nietzsche, Fraser argues, is "obsessed with the

[1] Nietzsche (1966) p.35
[2] De Man (1972) p.49
[3] Fraser (2002) pp.55-56

question of salvation"[1] and that his work is driven by an attempt to create a soteriological scheme that is life-affirming to replace what he saw as a sick, pathological Christian soteriology. An important reason why Nietzsche uses Christian imagery and ideas even though 'God is dead' is because the death of God does not bring theology to an end, rather to a fresh beginning: the death of God is what makes salvation possible. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche remarks, "We deny God; in denying God we deny accountability: only by doing *that* do we redeem the world."[2] To do this Nietzsche reaches for Christian imagery. Fraser argues that Nietzsche's religious language is crucial to understanding his philosophy, and is critical of works such as the study of Nietzsche's philosophy by Richard Schacht[3]. Schacht, argues Fraser, "is not unlike one of those whom Nietzsche writes: 'They no longer have any idea what religions are supposed to be for and as it were merely register their existence in the world with a kind of dumb amazement.'"[4] That is, he is concerned with a reductionist approach to Nietzsche, leaving aside the religious imagery as if it didn't matter: "For his part Nietzsche has little but scorn for those who seek to weigh up the question of God from the perspective of philosophical neutrality."[5] Likewise, Alistair Kee in *Nietzsche Against the Crucified* states that:

"Nietzsche came to describe himself as an atheist, but we should not try to understand him within that long tradition of philosophers who have joined battle with theologians over the traditional proofs for the existence of God...his position is so much more profound and complex that to describe him as an atheist, while not false, is liable to mislead."[6]

[1] Fraser (2002) p.30
[2] Nietzsche (1888c) p.54
[3] Schacht (1983)
[4] Fraser (2002), p. 29. Quote from Nietzsche (1998) 58
[5] *ibid.* p.30
[6] Kee (1999) p.27

2. Nietzsche's Own Paradigms

"It was only out of the soil of the German Reformation that there could grow a Nietzsche."

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer[1]

Fraser argues well for the importance of Nietzsche's religious upbringing on his philosophical enterprise, and his argument is pertinent to one of the aims of this thesis: that is to show that Nietzsche's religiosity is imbued with Reformation theology which results in a unique hybrid philosophy of 'post-modern Reformation theology' and, therefore, particularly applicable to a religion that is undergoing a form of 'reformation' in the post-modern world. As Nietzsche himself stresses the importance of environment upon one's 'soul', the German philosopher's upbringing reveals much about his religiosity. A number of factors contribute to Nietzsche's religious outlook: the tight-knit Lutheran background, the influence of his father, a pastor, his piety as a child, the key places of his upbringing all being at the geographical centre of Lutheranism, and enrolment to study theology at the University of Bonn. Fraser is right to see Luther as a "key background figure"[2] for Nietzsche, who saw Luther as one of his heroes until separating from him at the same time as the split with Wagner. More than this, Nietzsche is also deeply indebted to Lutheran Pietism, the movement that was prevalent in the time and place of Nietzsche's upbringing. Pietism is essentially anti-rationalist, indifferent to theological speculation and concerned more with 'instinct', with engaging with Christ on a personal rather than an intellectual level. This emphasis upon instinct is central to Nietzsche's philosophy, as this quote from *The Anti-Christ* highlights:

"It is false to the point of absurdity to see in a 'belief'...the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian: only Christian *practice*, a life such as he who died on the Cross *lived*, is Christian...Even today *such* a life is possible, for *certain* men even necessary: genuine primitive Christianity will be possible at all times...*Not* a belief but a doing..."[3]

[1] Bonhoeffer (1955) p.71
[2] *ibid* p. 38
[3] Nietzsche (1968a) 39, p.151

Here Nietzsche shows his suspicion for Scholasticism. More important is to trust your instincts, to have passion. For example, Nietzsche sent a letter to Peter Gast which said, "I have a taste, but it rests upon no reasons, no logic, and no imperative."[1] Karl Jaspers notes that "taste", for Nietzsche, is something which precedes thought or value-judgement[2]. In the case of religion, it is our taste that decides whether we participate or not, rather than our reason. Nietzsche was living at a time when the culture in which he lived still had this 'taste' for religion, but he was anticipating a time when the balance would tip in the favour of secularisation.

R.J. Hollingdale, in his introduction to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, even goes so far as to associate Nietzsche's Pietism with his *Amor Fati*:

"*Amor Fati*: Lutheran acceptance of the events of life as divinely willed, with the consequent affirmation of life as such as *divine*, as a product of divine will, and the implication that to hate life is blasphemous."[3]

Nietzsche's soteriology, his quest for human salvation, rests ultimately in philosophy. As Fraser notes:

"...Nietzsche's target is not God *per se* but rather patterns of thought inscribed into European culture by Christian soteriology. For a culture that retains a basic belief in the necessity of some saving agency external to human life, the loss of belief in God prompts one of two responses: either it responds in despair at the meaningless of life, or it simply replaces the God idea with another agency, another false idol, which, though it may not look anything much like God, performs the same role."[4]

Nietzsche sees Christian soteriology as nihilist, as life-denying and depraved in which life can only have meaning by reference to some other-worldly realm. With the death of God, this nihilism is unmasked and Europe is faced with apparent hopelessness, devoid of salvation. At this point, the point at which Nietzsche

[1] Jaspers (1965) p.49
[2] *ibid*
[3] Hollingdale in Nietzsche (1969) p. 28. Fraser, incidentally, is not convinced by Hollingdale's attempts to invert Christian concepts into Nietzschean concepts.
[4] Fraser (2002) p.73

believed existed in Europe during his time, the post-moral period; Nietzsche sees the opportunity to address the question of whether humanity really needs redemption from the divine: Cannot human life be self-affirming? Throughout Nietzsche's philosophy is a sense of urgency, a recognition that there existed in his time a very brief window of opportunity, for the power of *ressentiment*, of self-hatred, is a potent use of the will-to-power and would quickly regroup under another guise with new prophets. One reason why Nietzsche is so widely read today must be due to the recognition that these new salvations have come under such brands as communism, nationalism, capitalism, and so on. Also, one reason why Nietzsche is so very relevant to the issue of Islam and modernity, is that the very same sense of urgency applies to the Islamic world today in the same way it did to Europe one hundred years ago.

For Nietzsche, salvation is a form of internal transcendence, a healing process to cure humanity of the disease brought about by a misplaced attempt to ameliorate suffering by Christian redemption. Christianity, rather than healing, has made the patient worse, as humanity has also become dependent upon its medicine. Nietzsche's conception of health is not that of a pain-free state, for he believed pain to be a pre-requisite of health. Christianity does not cure, it *anaesthetises*: it blocks pain and persuades the people that the absence of pain is the same as salvation.[1] Fraser's central criticism of Nietzsche's soteriology is that it is incapable of facing the full horror of human suffering. Fraser sees Nietzsche's views of suffering as belonging to "the imaginings of a more comfortable and innocent age"[2]especially in the light of such horrors as Auschwitz. Here, Fraser is echoing the criticisms made by Martha Nussbaum:

"We might say, simplifying things a bit, that there are two sorts of vulnerability: what we might call bourgeois vulnerability – for example, the pains of solitude, loneliness, bad reputation, some ill health, pains that are painful enough but still compatible with thinking and doing philosophy – and what we might call basic vulnerability, which is the deprivation of resources so central to human functioning that thought and character are themselves impaired and not developed. Nietzsche focuses on the first sort of vulnerability, holds that it is not

[1] Nietzsche, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, also accuses Buddhism of this, but not Islam.
[2] Fraser (2002) p. 122

so bad; it may even be good for the philosopher. The second sort, I claim, he merely neglects...Who provides basic welfare support for Zarathustra? What are the 'higher men' doing all the day long? The reader does not know and the author does not seem to care...Nietzsche is...an armchair philosopher of human riskiness, living with no manual labour and three meals a day, without inner understanding of the ways in which contingency matters for virtue."[1]

Fraser readily acknowledges Nietzsche's own life of pain and suffering, of his debilitating headaches, his vomiting, his virtual blindness, but these would all be Nussbaum's "bourgeois vulnerability" for Nietzsche is still able to do philosophy. Perhaps more to the point, is that Fraser, more broadly, questions "the capacity or incapacity of philosophy for thinking human suffering. For in tending towards the general and the abstract philosophy becomes intrinsically disincarnate."[2] Fraser sees Nietzsche's philosophy, then, as abstract and elitist: it does not deal with particular people at a particular time, whereas Christianity has the central paradigm of the suffering of one individual. In this case, in the 'competition for paradigms', Nietzsche's soteriology - and, indeed, by extension, *all* philosophy - loses on the suffering front.

However, such a criticism seems to miss the point entirely of what Nietzsche aims to achieve through his philosophy. Nietzsche himself would be one of the first to proclaim Christ as a 'higher man'[3], in sharp contrast to the "armchair philosopher of human riskiness", and Nietzsche certainly would not consider *himself* as a higher man, or an *Übermensch*. Nietzsche's age was no more "comfortable and innocent" than our own and he was only too aware of how evil people can be and how much they can suffer: one need only read Nietzsche's predecessor Dostoyevsky for accounts of the cruelty man can inflict upon man[4]. It was this very awareness that inspires his attack upon Christianity, and any belief system that anaesthetises humanity against such suffering. The message is as appropriate today as it ever was when the European is able to watch the atrocities of war from the comfort of his armchair. Nietzsche, at the very least, did experience war at first hand, limited though it was. As a medical orderly he witnessed at first hand

[1] Nussbaum (1994) p.159-161
[2] Fraser (2002) p.139
[3] Nietzsche (1968a) Section 29, p. 141
[4] Notably, the accounts – taken from newspapers of the time – in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

scenes of appalling suffering and destruction. In a letter to Wagner he provides a graphic account of travelling for three days and nights in a cattle truck with the wounded.[1] But again, the extent of Nietzsche's own suffering relative to that of others does not weaken his philosophy: given that there is suffering in the world this should be accepted as the way nature is, rather than to create an other-worldly, pain-free existence in the next life. The importance of this observation for Islam will be evident in that its birth was in the hostile environment of the desert where suffering was only too real for most people, and it is ironic many have criticised Islam for portraying the cruelty that is man, rather than attempting to create an unachievable turn-the-other-cheek paradigm. In the same way many have wrongly accused Islam of 'glorifying' war. Fraser levels the same accusation against Nietzsche. However, Nietzsche does not glorify war and suffering, he *accepts* it. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche describes Islam as a religion for men, contemptuous of Christianity which he feels to be "a woman's religion."[2] Leaving aside this one example of many of Nietzsche's rather poor views on women, within context the point is made.

Alistair Kee[3] pinpoints Nietzsche's religiosity in his musings on the nature of 'inspiration'. He quotes a passage from *Ecce Homo*, which is worth quoting in full here:

"If one had the slightest residue of superstition left in one, one would hardly be able to set aside the idea that one is merely incarnation, merely mouthpiece, merely medium of overwhelming forces. The concept of revelation, in the sense that something suddenly, with unspeakable certainty and subtlety, becomes visible, audible, simply describes the fact. One hears, one does not seek; one takes, one does not ask who gives; a thought flashes up like lightning, with necessity, unfalteringly formed – I have never had any choice. An ecstasy whose tremendous tension sometimes discharges itself in a flood of tears, while one's steps now involuntarily rush along, now involuntarily lag; a complete being outside oneself with the distinct consciousness of a multitude of subtle shudders and trickling down to one's toes...Everything is in the highest degree involuntary but takes place as in a tempest of a feeling of freedom, of absoluteness, of power, of divinity."[4]

[1] Kee (1999) p. 15
[2] Nietzsche (1968c) 93
[3] Kee (1999) p. 118-123
[4] Nietzsche (1979) p. 102-3

This 'inspiration' is not conceived of in terms of ideas that Nietzsche himself invented, but rather it comes across as a mystical feeling "of power, of divinity". In the same book, when Nietzsche talks of his 'conception' of Zarathustra he says, "It was on these two walks that the whole of the first Zarathustra came to me, above all Zarathustra himself, as a type: more accurately, *he stole up on me…*"[1] However, as Kee notes, Zarathustra was not the only experience of inspiration which came to him. Again, in the same book, Nietzsche recounts his 'discovery' of the eternal recurrence:

"I shall now tell the story of Zarathustra. The basic conception of the work, the idea of eternal recurrence, the highest formula of affirmation that can possibly be attained – belong to the August of the year 1881: it was jotted down on a piece of paper with the inscription: '6,000 feet beyond man and time'. I was that day walking through the woods beside the lake of Silvaplana; I stopped beside a mighty pyramidal block of stone which reared itself up not far from Surlei. Then this idea came to me."[2]

Nietzsche described this experience in a letter to his friend Peter Gast written in August 1881: He described his elation, and his tears: "Not sentimental tears, mind you, but tears of joy, to the accompaniment of which I sang and talked nonsense, filled with a new vision far superior to that of other men."[3] In explaining the experience, Kee pre-empts one possible criticism:

"The description of the rock, 'a mighty pyramidal block of stone which reared itself up', suggests that Nietzsche had what would now be described, following Rudolf Otto, as a 'numinous' experience. It sounds like a mystical experience in the sense of seeing into the heart of reality. There have been those who have 'explained' the experience as the first symptoms of Nietzsche's final illness. How convenient! How reductionist! And does that mean that we should discount all of his works written after *Daybreak*?"[4]

This leads Kee to conclude that "The significance of the incident at Surlei is that the idea of the eternal recurrence came to Nietzsche as a religious or metaphysical

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[1] Nietzsche (1979) p.101
[2] *ibid.* p.99
[3] From Sils-Maria, 14th August, 1881. Quoted in Klossowski (1985)
[4] Kee (1999) p. 121

revelation, not as a scientific hypothesis."[1] Nietzsche is not against religion as such, but rather the forms of religion that have a debilitating effect upon human life. As this thesis will show, Islam – although not a pagan religion – need not be Platonic-Christian one either.

Preceding *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* presents us with a prophet. This prophet represents the new philosopher: one who is prepared to embrace the will to power and to call for a re-evaluation (or a *transvaluation*) of values. The concept of the *Übermensch* hardly appears in Nietzsche's writings and even in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* its character is not clearly specified. It is perhaps best understood as a contrast to the 'Last man' (*der Letzte Mensch*) who wishes to be like everyone else and would be happy just to be happy. Although such 'higher men' – such as Nietzsche's own heroes (Goethe, Napoleon, Julius Caesar etc.) – may contain a high degree of will to power, they are not *Übermenschen,* for there have never been any in history. As Nietzsche himself states in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra:* "There has never yet been a Superman. I have seen them both naked, the greatest and the smallest man. They are still all-too-similar to one another. Truly, I found even the greatest man – all-too-human!" [2] The historical Zarathustra (Zoroaster) perceived the world as a scene of conflict between the two cosmic forces of good and evil. However, as Nietzsche's philosophy went *beyond* good end evil, Zarathustra descends to rectify his own mistake of supposing objective moral values. He is the messenger for a new philosophy and becomes the mouthpiece for Nietzsche[3]. The main point of Zarathustra as a character is, firstly, to demonstrate the need for a new teacher, then to elaborate on the nature of his teaching and explore the concepts of the will to power and the eternal return.

The two concepts of the will to power and the eternal return need to be considered in some detail at this point as they both relate to Nietzsche's religiosity. For Nietzsche, the *Übermensch* would not be achieved in some Darwinian sense as

[1] Kee (1999) p 122
[2] Nietzsche (1969) p. 117
[3] However, the character of Zarathustra should not be associated too closely with the character of Nietzsche

part of the natural course of events. If anything, the natural course is for the herd, the weak, to dominate at the expense of the strong. At times, Nietzsche seems to talk of a kind of human entropy, the gradual decline of the human race until it reaches what he calls the ultimate, or last, man:

"Alas! The time is coming when man will give birth to no more stars. Alas! The time of the most contemptible man is coming, the man who can no longer despise himself. Behold! I shall show you the *Ultimate Man*."[1]

However, Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence, such as it is, suggests that there can never be a final state for mankind. As Zarathustra says:

"'Now I die and decay,' you would say, 'and in an instant I shall be nothingness. Souls are as mortal as bodies.
"'But the complex of causes in which I am entangled will recur – it will create me again! I myself am part of these causes of the eternal recurrence.
"'I shall return, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this serpent – not to a new life or a better life or a similar life:
"'I shall return eternally to this identical and self-same life, in the greatest things and in the smallest, to teach once more the eternal recurrence of all things.'"[2]

Apart from Zarathustra, the doctrine of the eternal recurrence only gets a few mentions in his later works. However, the doctrine was hinted at in *The Gay Science* where Nietzsche presents a 'what if' image.

"What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!
"Would you throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.' If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, 'Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?' would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and

[1] Nietzsche (1969) Prologue 5, p.46
[2] Nietzsche (1969) The Convalescent, pp. 237-8

to life *to crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?"[1]

Though not mentioned specifically, this 'what if?' scenario sums up the eternal recurrence: whatever in fact happens has happened an infinite number of times in the exact same detail and will continue to do so for eternity. You have lived your life an infinite number of times in the past and will do so an infinite number of times in the future. Like the doctrine of the will to power, Nietzsche presents the eternal recurrence as a thought experiment, not a provable truth.

Nietzsche considered that merely thinking of the possibility is the greatest of thoughts and would have an impact on how you perceive your self and how you live the rest of your life. This is why he gave it such central importance in *Zarathustra*. Proof is not important here, only the fact that we may consider as even a possibility is sufficient. Nietzsche's aim in presenting the eternal recurrence was to present a positive doctrine of an 'afterlife'; one that would not devalue this life. In this way it is much more powerful than the religious view of heaven. The Christian view of the after-life, Nietzsche thought, acts as a consolation and causes people to accept their lot in this life with the prospect of a better life when they die.

It is curious as he places greater emphasis on this doctrine in his notes and letters than any other aspect of his philosophy, yet he never elaborated upon it in his published works. When we consider what was important for Nietzsche, what stands out is his belief throughout his life that existence should be *justified*. That is, the true philosopher does not go through life happily in an unquestioning manner, but seeks to give meaning and value to his existence. In *The Birth of Tragedy*[2], Nietzsche thought life could be justified, could have value, through art, or rather 'Art' in the ancient Greek sense. The Greeks lived a life of 'Dionysian joy'. Nietzsche gave a lot of importance to art as a medium through which we comprehend the world. From the influence of the composer Wagner's writings Nietzsche, in his early work, held that there is a dualism between on the one hand, man and nature and, on the other hand, art and nature. He argued that man, by

[1] Nietzsche (1974) 341, pp. 273-4
[2] Nietzsche (1966)

exercising his intellect, is actually being drawn away from nature and, therefore, his true art. The fulfilled person is one who is in touch with his true nature and can express this through the medium of the perfect art. Here Nietzsche is making parallels between the role and function of art with religion.

Nietzsche developed this dualism of art and nature under the principles of Apollo and Dionysus. These two Greek gods are presented as a metaphor for two fundamental principles. Nietzsche compares the Apollonian with dreams. In a dream you express fantasies but these are a way of forgetting the world rather than confronting the realities of the world. Apollonian art is exemplified by painting and sculpture. In the same way in dreams we conjure up images, so we do this in painting. But these paintings are only representations of the world; they are fantasies that allow us to turn our backs, at least for a while, from the world we live in.

Dionysian art Nietzsche compares with intoxication. Nietzsche did not necessarily mean alcoholic intoxication, but rather the kind of ecstasy that can also be caused by other means than alcohol, for example through sexual intercourse, dancing or religious activities. Like the Apollonian, the Dionysian is a mechanism for fleeing from reality, but intoxication is not the same as fantasy. Dream fantasies are an individual and private experience when you turn away from the world. Dionysian intoxication, however, is not about forgetting the world, but forgetting your *self* and experiences more of a mystical communal union. Dionysian art, then, is more akin to music and poetry. Nietzsche accepted that the distinction between painting and music was not always so clear. It is quite possible, for example, to have Dionysian painting and Nietzsche was aware that music had Apollo as its patron god. The more important distinction is how one *responds* to the work of art, rather than the work of art itself.

Nietzsche stresses that Apollo and Dionysus are not opposites, but work side by side. They complement each other, and, therefore, the perfect art is one that embodies both the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Nietzsche saw this art as

existing in Greek tragedy. Nietzsche's most important contribution in *The Birth of Tragedy* is the attack on the view – prevalent amongst the middle classes of the time – that ancient Greece was so idyllic. Rather, Nietzsche argued, for the Greeks life was brutal, short and full of suffering. How did the Greeks cope with these facts of life? Greek art, through the fusion of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, was such a mechanism for making life tolerable. The Apollonian element was needed to create the illusion, the fantasy, which distracted them from the horrors of everyday life. If, Nietzsche argued, the Greeks were supposed to be as happy and sunny as pictured, then there would be no need for Apollonian art, yet there is plenty of evidence of Greek tragedy to show that the Greeks suffered immensely. In Greek tragedy we are presented with the images of gods and men, of heroes and monsters, as a way of transforming their fears for such things, in the same way dreams are projections of our own fears and doubts. The Dionysian element is the tragic chorus present in the tragedy. The chorus would narrate, through song, the story. The chorus acted as an artistic substitute for the Dionysian rites by allowing the audience to identify themselves with these singing, dancing characters and therefore participating within the tragedy themselves and not be mere spectators. This was therapeutic, allowing the audience to feel a sense of unity with his fellows, with the chorus, and with the drama of the tragedy as well as feel themselves to be god.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche portrays Greek tragedy as an interactive, mystical and unifying experience that provided a therapeutic outlet for a people who were sensitive to the suffering and uncertainties of everyday life and in which man is in tune with nature. Man is no longer an artist but a work of art. Art possesses form and so by making life a work of art it gives the world a form, a structure. The greatest tragedians Nietzsche quotes are Sophocles and Aeschylus in the fifth century BC. However, the other tragedian that is often associated with these two, that of Euripides, Nietzsche sees as the enemy of great art. Nietzsche argued that Euripides rid Greek drama of the role of the chorus, of the Dionysian element. The chorus became less central to the drama, and became a matter of mere convention. Euripides, Nietzsche believed, killed tragedy. Nietzsche

characterises Euripides as a rational man and could not see what the seemingly irrational function of the chorus had. The philosopher Socrates, like Euripides, emphasises the importance of reason and in the belief that, through the power of reason, we can gain access to truth. Nietzsche always placed a greater emphasis on the irrational and the instinctual and also believed that there is no such thing as 'truth'. Great art is no 'truer' than science or religion but Nietzsche believed art could at least put man in touch with nature and his fellow man. It is an acceptance that there is only this life and it is full of suffering, rather than a belief that there is a better, pain-free life. Although Nietzsche admired the genius of Socrates, as well as his achievements, he saw Socrates as representative of the desire to *explain*, to engage in argument and counter-argument, rather than accept that ultimately there are no explanations. Nietzsche also was not against reason and science; he would be the first to praise its achievements and it role in the enhancement of life. What he condemned was the regard of reason as providing *answers*, as delivering man from a state of ignorance.

Nietzsche saw *The Birth of Tragedy* as a manifesto for change, as a call for a revolution. He believed that Man had lost all sense of purpose and was clinging on to religious and philosophical views that were no longer credible. He called for a return to the principles of Greek tragedy and devotes the final third of the book to the praise of Wagner as the new tragedian.

However, Nietzsche, later in life, felt that art was not the salvation he had originally hoped and it was in August 1881, while walking amongst the high mountains in Switzerland, that the thought came to him of the eternal recurrence. With this thought came an experience, a psychological impact that, he claims, caused him to affirm life and to love it.

This feeling of joy, Nietzsche thought, is the formula for the greatness of the human being, and he is making an essential connection with the doctrine of the *Übermensch*. The *Übermensch* is one who, like Zarathustra, is able to embrace the doctrine of eternal recurrence and find redemption within it. If, before and

after every action, you were to ask: "Do you want this action to occur in again and again for all eternity?" and you could answer in the joyful affirmative then you are exercising the will to power in a positive manner. The weak look to the next life for hope, whereas the strong look to this life.

Between 1878, when *Human, All Too Human*[1] was published, and 1881, when he wrote *Daybreak*[2], Nietzsche underwent a drastic change in life. In 1879 he resigned his professorship at Basel and spent one third of that year confined to bed with severe migraine. Nietzsche was essentially a solitary person, and so he would certainly not wish to be pitied over his solitude (especially after his own philosophical views on pity). He no longer had a permanent address, travelling between Genoa, Nice, Venice, Turin, Switzerland and Germany. He lived in cheap hotel rooms or modest lodgings.

In terms of literature, *Daybreak* is a fine and clear work and yet it was almost totally ignored. It is subtitled '*Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*' and its main concern is the idea that morality had developed out of the desire for power and the fear of disobedience. Those who are deprived of power results in both fear and the will to power. Fear is the negative motive that causes us to avoid something, whereas the will to power is the positive motive that causes us to strive for something.

With *Daybreak*, Nietzsche has drifted from the dualism of *The Birth of Tragedy*, to a form of monism. There is only *one* substance, the will to power. It was now becoming apparent to Nietzsche that the will to power is the basic drive of *all* human efforts. Not only is it a psychological urge that explains forms of human behaviour, but it also detracts humanity from achieving greatness by engaging in the lust for money and power politics. Nietzsche now saw ancient Greek society – for him the height of humanity – in terms of the will to power. It is the basic drive that resulted in the development of Greek culture for they preferred power more than anything else, more than a good reputation for example. The only thing that is 'real' is will to power. Even our conscious processes, our rational capacity, are

[1] Nietzsche (1986a)
[2] Nietzsche (1982)

just an expression this basic force. Therefore, all our problems are psychological ones, not metaphysical. In fact, philosophy, morality, politics, religion, science, all of culture and civilisation, can be explained in terms of our will to power. The will to power, therefore, is a unifying principle. It is realised in nature and history, in the rise and fall of great civilisations and religions, in the motive behind cultural and artistic activity. The will to power is behind all our philosophical views of the world and the impulse behind the acquisition of all kinds of knowledge.

Despite his pronouncements that "God is dead", Zarathustra is a very religious, a very spiritual figure. As Henry David Aiken wrote in his essay *An Introduction to Zarathustra*:

"There is...a sense of the term 'secularism' which, as it seems to me, has no application to Nietzsche: that is, the sense in which secularism represents a deliberate, anti-spiritual worldliness and materialism. Nietzsche is, or means to be, 'this-worldly', but 'worldly' is perhaps the last word that could justly be applied to him. In truth, the quality of Nietzsche's thought is incurably religious...Nowhere is Nietzsche's essentially religious mentality closer to the surface than in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*...It is apparent, above all, in the mystical doctrine of the 'eternal recurrence', the point of which is nothing if not religious."[1]

The new philosopher that Zarathustra proclaims is prepared to shatter old idols and to question the established order. To what extent can Muhammad be seen as a Nietzschean 'higher man'? Nietzsche praises Christ as a 'higher man', as one who questioned the laws of authority and values it upheld. Yet the teachings of Christ were hijacked by society and twisted to suit its needs, leading to atrophy. The new philosopher, who is "human, all too human" is turned into a super-human. The obtainable becomes an unobtainable ideal, the Historical becomes Transhistorical. Can these symptoms be seen in Islam?

[1] Aiken (1973) pp.125-6

3. What Has Nietzsche Got to do With Islam?

"Nietzsche was no atheist, but his God was dead."

- Carl Jung[1]

It has been intimated on more than one occasion in this chapter that Nietzsche's philosophy is particularly relevant to Islam. The purpose of determining Nietzsche's religiosity is to see how it parallels that of Islam. Alistair Kee has provided a useful breakdown of what he considers to be the features of Nietzsche's philosophy which gives it the character of 'faith' and some of these have been listed below to demonstrate its connection with Islam[2]:

1. "A faith makes a judgement against the contemporary world." When something has gone wrong, when things are not as they should be, a religious leader comes along to warn. Nietzsche does just this: "Things are far from just fine and something better be done about it. In this case it is not improvement, but restoration."

2. "Faith therefore comes as bad news: it exposes the taken for granted as flawed."

3. "Faith is met with resistance. People do not wish to be alienated from their nearest and dearest, from everything that has been precious to them."

4. "But if faith comes as bad news it could not be justified at all unless consequent on the acceptance of the bad news, there was possibility of good news." For Nietzsche, this is his affirmation of life, his *amor fati.*

5. "To those who accept the logic of terror, the destruction in the dialectic, there is at last hope. Hope is a feature of faith and Nietzsche's message is one of hope."

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[1] Jung (1983) p 45

[2] All the quotes in the following thirteen points are from Kee (1999) pp.130-140

6. "Faith brings a new understanding – of the self, of the world – what the New Testament calls 'repentance'." Nietzsche's philosophy 'enlightens', as does all faith.

7. "Faith is the affirmation of life, the new life."

8. "The life of faith – religious, philosophical or ideological – is a life which requires change." Like Fraser, Kee sees Nietzsche as believing in human salvation, in 'redemption'.

9. "As early as the *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche tells us that a species which has developed to its upper limits can transcend these limits..."

10. The eternal recurrence "is faith, a philosophical faith which it is difficult to distinguish from religious faith."

11. For Nietzsche, there is a redemptive class that will make way for a Redeemer. His philosophical faith also incorporates longing for the Redeemer.

12. "The sequence of faith...begins with anxiety, depression, even in Nietzsche's case terror, but must end in a sense of peace, well-being, happiness."

13. "There is one final element which is characteristic of faith. It can be described in several ways, but it is the attitude of devotion." Nietzsche's philosophical faith acknowledges that there is something greater than this life, something more enduring.

Kee's attempts at parallels are a little too contrived at times, but these features have been outlined not only because of their relation to faith generally, but also to Islamic paradigms more specifically. These will become clear throughout the thesis, but it is evident that clear parallels can be seen:

"...the distinction between religious faith and philosophical faith seems less clear. Nietzsche's faith is both imbued with and influenced by the insights of religion...It is also becoming clear that his rejection of religion – in its institutional form – may have been out of his consecration to the holy itself. A truly irreligious man would not have thought the project worthwhile."[1]

4. Is there room for monotheism?

"He is, by the very texture of his soul and mind, one of the most radically religious natures that the nineteenth century brought forth."

- Erich Heller[2]

"...the last German philosopher who was passionately in search of God."

- Martin Heidegger[3]

We may accept that Nietzsche was a religious soul, but the image that comes across so far is of a man who identified with the 'holy' not unlike that of, for example, Wordsworth. This is much more a 'nature-religion', a paganism. Kee notes that, "Previously he [Nietzsche] was not offended by the man Jesus, but by the degenerate Christ as constructed by the herd. Here he is not alienated by the possibility of theism, but by 'monoto-theism', that deadly boring God who is worshipped by those who themselves have never affirmed life."[4] If Nietzsche is against 'monoto-theism' does this imply he is against 'mono-theism'? In *Beyond Good and Evil*[5], Nietzsche praises the Old Testament, for it "portrays people, things and utterances in such a grand style that nothing in Greek or Indian writing can be compared with it." As with Homer, its greatness refutes the Christian notion of 'the good', and it is perhaps the greatest sin to have "pasted" the New Testament onto the Old. Nietzsche welcomes the death of the God of pity, but the

[1] Kee (1999) p.142-3
[2] Heller (1988) p 11
[3] Quoted in Haar (1988) p 157.
[4] *ibid* pp162-3
[5] Nietzsche (1998) Section 52, p.48

God of the Hebrew Scripture is more worthy of worship. It is only when the priestly class emerged that morality supervenes with 'Thou shalt not!' It is the system of morals that become attached to God that Nietzsche is against:

"God has been reduced to a supremely human, humanitarian being, having the supreme attributes of goodness and knowledge. This is not simply an anthropomorphic view of God, but a God who mirrors the interests, ethos, the sense of order and gentility of a social class...Nietzsche, who at the level of morality is promoting the noble values, at the level of affirmation of the will to power, invites us at least to conceive of a God whose attributes are not the projections of the middle class."[1]

5. Iqbal and Nietzsche

The appreciation of Nietzsche's religiosity is not only evident amongst non-Muslim scholars. Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938) received an early classical education and studied at the Scotch Mission College in Sialkot. In 1895 he went to Lahore and taught philosophy. In 1905 he travelled to Europe where he studied at Cambridge with R.A. Nicholson - the noted Sufi scholar - and the neo-Hegelian John McTaggart. Iqbal then studied in Heidelberg and Munich achieving his doctorate which was entitled *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia.* His heritage derives from two sources: his Islamic upbringing, and his study of Western philosophy. His writings reflect the influence of the Qur'an, *hadith,* Muslim thinkers like Ibn Taimiya, Wali Allah, and Rumi, and Western philosophers such as Hegel, Bergson and, of course, Nietzsche.[2]

Iqbal's thought has been described as, "...an integrated concept of the Self, fusing together the Sufi's passion for union with God, the idea of dynamism expounded by Bergson, the groping for self-assertion which was the philosophy of Nietzsche, and the Sharia of Islam."[3]

[1] Kee (1999) pp. 172-3
[2] Esposito (1983) p. 176
[3] Mujeeb (1967) p. 454

Like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Iqbal sees Muhammad as the archetype for a politics of redemption: one who founded a new metaphysic of morals that consisted of courage and honesty; one who cast aside the false idols. Muhammad was the salve for the human predicament of the time: a state of *Jahiliyya*, of nihilism and decadence. Indeed, certain Muslim modernist scholars believed that parts of the Islamic world had returned to the state of *Jahiliyya.*[1]

Almost all of Iqbal's most significant works were written after his return from the Europe, and there is undeniably a Nietzschean influence within them. In 1915 he published the poem *Asrar-i-Khudi* which evidently possesses a Nietzschean influence. Other works that followed, such as *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi, Javid-Nama, Piam-iMashriq*, and *Zarb-i-Kalim* are also Nietzschean in tone. In the *Piam-i-Mashriq* there are three poems on Nietzsche, and it is most conspicuous in the *Asrar-i-Khudi.* It is unfair, and inaccurate, to state that Iqbal derived his whole philosophy from Nietzsche, but nor is it correct to say that there is no influence at all![2] Like Nietzsche, Iqbal can be seen as both unconventional and iconoclastic in his thought and method. As Subhash Kashyap states: "Iqbal is a Nietzschean in being a determined enemy of conventional values."[3]

It is more accurate to say that Iqbal used his extensive knowledge of Western - and especially German - thought to incorporate it within his knowledge of Islam. It would be worthwhile to examine some of his poems to show the influence. For example, in *Asrar-i-Khudi* (*'Secrets of the Self'* published 1915) the man of *Khudi* ('self'), the self-creative ego, smells suicide in conventionalism. A life of decadence, following the beaten track of traditionalism, is no life at all. The prophets, in true Nietzschean fashion, are the destroyers of idols and creators of new values. This attitude is reflected in the following lines:

"They said, 'Is our world agreeable to thee?'
I said, 'No, it is not' - they said, 'Upset it'.
Raise the self to such a height
that before destiny,

[1] Most famously, Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-92) referring to his home of Arabia
[2] See Kashyap (1955) for segments of these poems
[3] *ibid* p. 177

God should ask a man, 'What dost thou desire?'
Step ever more fearlessly in the path of life, for in this whole expanse of the universe, there is none beside thee."[1]

One notices the sense of individualism here. Man is the highest of all created things, and it is his duty to say yes to life. Like Nietzsche, Iqbal saw Christianity as a religion of decadence; elevating the slave-virtues of meekness, humility, compassion, mercy, and pity: both an unnatural and impossible moral system.

Piam-i-Mashriq contains a beautiful short poem on Nietzsche which expresses Iqbal's attitude towards him:

"His voice is a peal of thunder. Those who desire sweet songs should fly from him. He has thrust a sword into the heart of the West, his hands are red with the blood of Christianity. He has built his house of idols on the foundations of Islam, his heart is a believer though his brain denies...."[2]

Iqbal talks of the three stages in the development of the self, and this corresponds closely with Nietzsche's three "metamorphoses of the spirit" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* The first of Zarathustra's Speeches[3] comes soon after his new insight that he can fulfil his mission to mankind only by finding fit companions and singling them out from the "herd" to which they now belong. His reference to the spirit of man, the three "metamorphoses of the spirit" - first the camel, second the lion, third the child – matches Iqbal's three stages of obedience to the law, self-control, and Vicegerency of God. When describing the first stage, obedience to law, Iqbal likens this to the camel, in terms of the creature's obedience, utility and hardiness. For Nietzsche, the camel spirit is the heroic spirit, that of the tightrope walker. Essentially, the individual must possess the "weight-bearing spirit" in the first place to move on to the second spiritual stage in development. Although the camel, in its nature, may be perceived as being homely, obedient and domesticated, it is also able to carry the burden of the spirit. The camel already possesses what is required and can tap upon this spirit to move one to a further upward journey of the soul, giving the spirit a noble and heroic nature.

[1] Translation by Nicholson (1944)
[2] Translation by Kashyap (1955) p.179
[3] Nietzsche (1969) Chapter 1, p.39

Zarathustra, like all prophets, already exhibits a camel spirit; one that takes upon itself what is hardest. To create a follower, one must first be willing to bear much. Before the pursuance of this goal, one must be willing and impelled to difficult tasks.

However, the transformation from what one is now to that of the camel cannot be taught; the camel spirit is the heroic sprit, that of the tightrope walker. Zarathustra aims to teach the qualities that are required to become the *Übermensch*; but he must also rely upon the individual possessing the initial heroic qualities to take on the journey in the first place. For Iqbal, to become the Perfect Muslim one must first of all be brave enough to submit to the will of Allah and then face the inevitable consequences of such submission. In other words - and for both Nietzsche and Iqbal - one must first of all be spiritually inclined. The camel "renounces and is reverent"; important qualities for the man of faith to have. Nietzsche is not critical of reverence; to become the *Übermensch* you must revere the *Übermensch*. Thus, to become the Perfect Muslim you must revere the Perfect Muslim.

After a period of carrying the load of commandments and obligations, man - for Nietzsche - passes from the camel to the lion stage; the stage of self-determination and control. But why, asks Zarathustra, does the camel not suffice? Isn't it adequate to be reverent? Zarathustra's answer to his own question is that the camel must become a lion precisely because the spirit that would bear much must bear the heaviest burden of destroying what it has come to revere; the old values. It is a destructive act, because without those values the individual seems faced with nihilism. For Iqbal, however, it is reverence for false values that must be destroyed. While maintaining reverence in itself, this must be redirected towards the values of the Perfect Muslim, rather than a belief in the values of, for example, materialism or atheism. The quality of self-control is required for this; to resist the temptations that the Western, modernist world have to offer, simply because they are brief delights and, ultimately, undermine the spirit and lead to mediocrity and decadence. The lion, however, cannot possibly survive because of the

confrontation with nihilism; how long can one resist the temptations of non-religious values if there is nothing else to revere?

This is where the third transformation, or metamorphosis, comes in: that of the child. "The child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes. Yes, a sacred Yes is needed, my brothers, for the sport of creation: the spirit now wills *its own* will, the spirit sundered from the world now wins *its own* world."[1] This "sacred Yes" is highly significant, for Nietzsche often speaks of reverence and the sacred. The child is yes-saying, compared to the no-saying of the camel and the lion. The child is at the beginning of what it will become: the mature *Übermensch*. There are still more transformations to come, but the spirit is now at least in the right direction. This creator of new values, for Iqbal, is the Divine Vicegerent. The purpose of human life on earth is the creation of self-creative egos, the men with *Khudi*; the lords of creation. Iqbal's Vicegerent is his Perfect Muslim; of which the finest example is the Prophet Muhammad. Speaking of the Prophet, he says:

"He is the preface to the book of two worlds,
All the people of the world are slaves and he is the master.
Mankind is the cornfield and thou the harvest,
Thou art the goal of life's caravan."[2]

We will come back to Iqbal and his correspondence between that of Zarathustra and Muhammad in Chapter Five. However, it is worth noting here that Giles Fraser also makes reference to 'The Three Metamorphoses' and sees within it a clear example of Nietzsche's religiosity. He considers the allegory to be a rendering of "inverted rebirth"[3]. That is, Nietzsche seeks salvation in an inverted version of Lutheranism by urging his readers to undergo, in reverse, the process by which humanity came to wallow in self-hatred. For example, Luther states that "Whoever humiliates himself in the eyes of the world is totally exalted in the eyes of God." This, for Nietzsche, sums up what Christianity is all about: to love God is to hate oneself and, given that God is dead, humanity is left alone to hate itself

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[1] Nietzsche (1969) p.55
[2] Kashyap (1955) p.183
[3] Fraser (2002) p 102

with no salvation. However, Nietzsche argues salvation is possible through the dangerous and terrifying process of giving up any faith in the divine and to rely upon oneself for meaning to life, even though there are no guarantees that this transformation will lead to greater happiness. In fact, the attempt may destroy you, but the benefits, should you succeed, are that you will be free from self-hatred and love yourself wholeheartedly; this is the *Übermensch.*

Fraser quotes John Clayton, who claims that, "in this single parable [The Three Metamorphoses] the whole of Nietzsche's message is contained."[1] Fraser interprets the camel to symbolise humanity that is laden with the guilt of Christian morality. However it is able to become a lion and is thus in the process of becoming an autonomous individual capable of pride and self-respect. The lion symbolises strength and power, necessary qualities if the self is to be overcome, but Fraser rightly stresses that this is not the *Übermensch*, the 'blond-beast' so often misunderstood: "The lion is simply the nihilistic vanguard in the creation of a new humanity. In order to complete the process of spiritual transformation the lion must turn itself into a child."[2] This echoes Matthew 18:3: "...unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." The *Übermensch* is not, then, a blond warrior, but rather a child playfully re-creating itself, rather like Adam and Eve before the Fall.

However, Fraser is right to say that, "Nietzsche's recourse to the image of the child suggests a point of fundamental weakness in his overall salvation story...It is like saying the prostitute can only be redeemed by virginity."[3] Although it can be conceived for the camel to become the lion, the possibilities of the lion, the battle-scared warrior, reclaiming the innocence of childhood is considerably more difficult, if not impossible. As Michael Tanner points out:

"That phrase 'a new beginning' is dangerous. For it is usually Nietzsche's distinction as a connoisseur of decadence to realise that among our options is not that of wiping the slate clean. We need to have a self to overcome, and that self will be the result of the whole Western tradition, which it will somehow manage

[1] Clayton (1985) p. 179
[2] Fraser (2002) p 102
[3] *ibid.* p 104

to '*aufheben*', a word that Nietzsche has no fondness for, because of its virtual Hegelian copyright, and which means simultaneously 'to obliterate', 'to preserve' and 'to lift up'. Isn't that just what the *Übermensch* is called upon to do, or if we drop him, what we, advancing upon our present state, must do if we are to be 'redeemed'?"[1]

For Iqbal to make the analogy of the Perfect Muslim, of Muhammad, with the child in the Nietzschean parable, is to misunderstand Muhammad in the sense that the Prophet was not "wiping the slate clean" but appealing to history, culture, environment and tradition for salvation. Muhammad can be seen as much more a deconstructionist than a proponent of *tabula rasa*. In the same way Tanner notes that the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, the 'New European', is the "result of the whole Western tradition", the Muslims of seventh century Arabia are likely a result of their own rich tapestry of culture and tradition. They can no more 'annihilate' this self, this Nietzschean soul, than can the *Übermensch*.

Perhaps it is best to appreciate the parable as an example of Nietzsche's religiosity, and to see it as just that; a *parable*, in the same way Plato's simile of line might help to illustrate what is meant by the Form of the Good but, if we examine it too closely – that is take it too *literally* – it is not as effective as we might like.

[1] Tanner (1994) p.53

Chapter Four

The Soul as Text: The Qur'anic Paradigm

"It [the Qur'an] is the first and primary source [of the Islamic constitution], containing as it does all the fundamental directions and instructions from God Himself. The directions and instructions cover the entire gamut of man's existence. Herein are to be found not only directives relating to individual conduct but also principles regulating all the aspects of the social and cultural life of man. It has also been clearly shown therein as to why should Muslims endeavour to create and establish a State of their own."

- Mawdudi, *First Principles of the Islamic State*[1]

"What? The 'miracle' only an error of interpretation? A lack of philology?"

- Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*[2]

1. Making Sense of the Qur'an: The Task of Hermeneutics

Although the Qur'an does not explicitly outline a structure for an Islamic state, this is not to say that the holy book should not have an important role in determining what Islam has to say about mankind and its relationship to the world, for ultimately this is the *raison d' etre* of the Qur'an. However, does this require us to go so far as the Transhistorical, as Mawdudi's assertion that the Qur'an's "directions and instructions cover the entire gamut of man's existence"?

We first of all need to be clear what relevance the Qur'an has to contemporary discourse and how we are to approach the text. In terms of the relevance, it almost goes without saying that it is central to the Islamic collective consciousness, quite possibly more so than the Prophet. It is central because all Muslims read it, all Muslims have a familiarity with the text, even if they have only a scant understanding of the life of the Prophet. Of course, the extent of the

[1] Mawdudi (1967) p. 5
[2] Nietzsche (1998) Section 47

familiarity with the Qur'an is incredibly varied: from those who only know it via translations, those who have read it in Arabic but cannot actually understand the native language, those who both understand Arabic and have read it in Arabic, and those Islamic scholars who have not only read it in Arabic, understood it, but also quite probably have memorised much (if not all) of it and devoted much of their lives to interpreting it.

Bearing this in mind we are faced with a problem here: how is the modern reader meant to interpret the Qur'an? Can there be any agreement reached as to the fundamental tenets of the Qur'an, and can we then proceed to apply these tenets to an Islamic state? A further point that also must be considered is that even if it can be shown that the Qur'an *is* conducive to, for example, individual liberty, freedom of thought, the rights of minorities, and so on, what possible reason is there to suppose that we *ought* to apply these principles to the establishment of a state?

How is the reader – given that he or she comes from different time periods, cultures, beliefs, and so on – meant to make sense of the Qur'an? This question is at the root of hermeneutics, a term defined by Carl Braaten as:

"the science of reflecting on how a word or an event in a past time and culture may be understood and become existentially meaningful in our present situation. It involves both the methodological rules to be applied in exegesis as well as the epistemological assumptions of understanding."[1]

However, since Rudolf Bultmann, the term hermeneutics is "generally used to describe the attempt to span the gap between past and present."[2] Hermeneutics assumes that every reader of a text brings with him or her their own 'baggage' of beliefs, expectations, questions, and so on, to the extent that it would be "absurd to demand from any interpreter the setting aside of his/her subjectivity and interpret a text without pre-understanding and the questions initiated by it [because without these] the text is mute."[3] In Nietzschean terms, any attempt at a philosophy is autobiographical, rather than being able to claim any objectivity.

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[1] Braaten (1966) p 131
[2] Ferguson (1986) p 5
[3] Bultmann (1955) p.251

However, despite this, we must still be able to ascertain a degree of consensus concerning certain aspects of the teaching: for subjectivity need not imply extreme scepticism.

Can we then talk of a fixed meaning, of an 'historical positivism'? The Qur'an, after all, is considered to be literally the word of God, not a work that has been 'inspired' by God, or 'influenced' by God. In this sense it has a timelessness and a universality. Having said that, all revelations are a commentary on a particular society; they address a specific audience in a specific language and so are part of that socio-historical and linguistic milieu. Making the transcendental into the earthly results in a degree of necessary interpretation. There has been some reluctance in Muslim scholarship (compared with, say, Christian scholarship) to pursue the question of temporal causality in the background of the Qur'an's 'Otherness', perhaps for fear that this will weaken the potency of its transcendental quality. However, although there is a reluctance to pursue the *implications* of such temporal causality there is nonetheless a general acknowledgment amongst Muslim scholars that the Qur'an needed to address itself within a social, cultural, historical and linguistic context if it is to be understood at all. As Mawdudi himself acknowledges: "Although the Qur'an addresses itself to all of humankind, its contents are, on the whole, vitally related to the taste and temperament, the environment and history and customs and usages of Arabia."[1] Further, Sayyid Qutb notes that, "We see how the Qur'an took [society] by the hand step by step, as it stumbled and got up again, strayed and was righted, faltered and resisted, suffered and endured."[2]

A perennial concern for the monotheistic religions is how to reconcile a timeless, immutable God with what appears to be progressive revelation (*tadrij*); that is, a series of revelations over periods of time, to different prophets and related to different contexts. The Qur'an was not transmitted as one whole text, but as a response to the demands of concrete situations. This is evidenced from parts of the Qur'an, for example: "We have divided the Qur'an into sections so that you

[1] Mawdudi (1988) pp. 26-27
[2] Qutb (1954) p.91.

may recite it to the people with deliberation. We have imparted it by gradual revelation."[1] When the unbelievers ask, "Why was the Qur'an not revealed to him entire in a single revelation?"[2], the response is, "We have revealed it thus so that We may strengthen your faith. We have imparted it to you by gradual revelation."[3]

Possibly the most renowned traditional scholar of *tadrij* is Shah Wali Allah Dehlawi (d. 1762) who developed a theory of the relationship between revelation and its socio-historical context. According to Dehlawi, the ideal form of *din* (which he interprets to mean primordial ideal religion) corresponds to the ideal form of nature. The actualised manifestations of the ideal *din* descend in successive revelations depending upon changing material and historical conditions. Every succeeding revelation reshapes the world into a new *gestalt* which embodies *din*. According to Dehlawi, *din* adapts its form according to the customs, faiths and practices of the recipient community. Dehlawi uses the analogy of God as the physician who prescribes medication according to the needs, temperament, age and so on of the patient. It follows that to attempt to apply the principles of the Meccan community of seventh century Arabia to any modern society is rather like a physician prescribing the medicine for a young child for that of an adult. Nonetheless, the *'din'* remains, though in an altered form. The problem for interpretation, then, is determining what that *din* is.

The principle of progressive revelation manifests itself into two related disciplines of interpretation: *asab al-nuzul* (events occasioning revelation) and *naskh* (abrogation). In terms of the former, this deals with the transmission of the '*sabab*' of a revelation in terms of its time, place and circumstances. The word '*sabab*' can be translated as 'cause' although this might suggest that the event caused the revelation, which would not be according to standard Muslim scholarship. Andrew Rippin has written a good survey of classical works on *asab al-nuzul* and he states that, "The *sabab* is a constant reminder of God and is the rope, that being one of the meanings of *sabab* in the Qur'an, by which human

[1] Qur'an 17:106
[2] Qur'an 25:32
[3] *ibid.*

contemplation ascends to the highest levels even while dealing with the mundane aspects of the text."[1] Therefore, we are not dealing with merely a text, but an interactive process between the reader and the author. The Qur'an is more of an organic entity, than a static text. However, to attempt to interpret it in light of the modern world, there needs to be an understanding of the situational context to which it was originally revealed, for every chapter "is so vitally linked with its situational background...knowledge of the occasions of revelation is of extreme importance and numerous verses will remain incomprehensible without it."[2]

The latter discipline, *naskh,* in Islamic jurisprudence, means the verification and elaboration of different modes of abrogation. The Qur'anic proof for *naskh* is: "If we abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We will replace it by a better one or one similar."[3] There are different understandings of *naskh*: Firstly, the Qur'anic abrogation of divine scriptures that preceded it; secondly, the repeal of certain Qur'anic texts that are said to have been blotted out of existence; thirdly, the abrogation of an earlier commandment of the Qur'an by a later revelation, although the earlier commandment still remains in the Qur'an; fourthly, the abrogation of a prophetic practice by a Qur'anic injunction and; finally, the abrogation of a Qur'anic injunction by a prophetic practice. Although there have been many works on the practice of *naskh*, the problem one has is that, "there is probably no other discipline in traditional Qur'anic studies to rival it in confusion regarding its validity, meaning and applicability."[4]

Undoubtedly, the problem with abrogation, and this relates closely with *asab al-nuzul*, is how to accurately determine which are earlier verses and which are later and, therefore, which abrogates which; further, the extent to which one verse is *meant* to abrogate another. In fact, a number of scholars such as Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan and Isma'il al-Faruqi have rejected *naskh* altogether, both arguing that the revelations that came earlier in certain circumstances and were modified or improved later were not actually abrogated, rather earlier verses should be

[1] Rippin (1988) p.1
[2] Mawdudi (1988) p.3
[3] Qur'an 2:106
[4] Esack (1997) p. 58

regarded as valid and therefore implemented should conditions be similar to those in which they were revealed.[1] Muslim scholars have disagreed over both the meaning of the term '*naskh*' and the extent to which the number of verses have actually been abrogated. For example, as many past Muslims interpreted '*naskh*' in the literal sense of 'removal'[2], the debate then raged over how many verses were removed, reaching to some five hundred verses. This led to a more recent trend – especially in the 1960s amongst such scholars as al-Faruqi and Hassan – to reduce this number of abrogated verses or, further aback, to deny their actual occurrence altogether.[3] Whatever the various opinions surrounding *naskh*, there is at least a unanimity concerning what Fazlur Rahman calls "the situational character of the Qur'an."[4] In other words, we can accept that verses were revealed in a progressive manner within the context of particular social conditions. As Muslim society took shape, the Qur'anic revelations kept up with the changing circumstances. But what happens when the revelations come to an end, yet society continues to change?

For anyone committed to determining how Qur'anic injunctions can be applied to societies of today, the stance of Rahman must be adopted, according to which the Qur'an, "despite it being clothed in the flesh and blood of a particular situation, outflows through and beyond that given context of history."[5] Therefore:

"The challenge for every generation of believers is to discover their own moment of revelation, their own intermission in revelation, their own frustrations with God, joy with His consoling grace, and their own guidance by the principle of progressive revelation."[6]

For Fazlur Rahman[7] especially, the warning is clear: the objective is not to search for accounts of isolated historical incidents which occurred during Muhammad's era and then attempt to construct a 'politically correct' view for the modern world.

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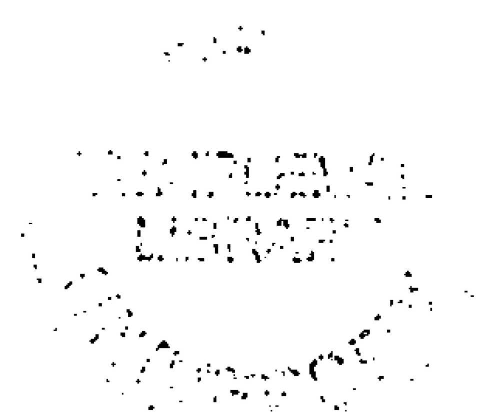
[1] Esack (1997) p. 58
[2] notably amongst the Companions and Followers
[3] For example, Abu Muslim al-Isfahani (d. 1527). See Esack (1997) p. 59
[4] Rahman (1966) p.10
[5] *ibid.*, p.11
[6] Esack (1997) p.60
[7] Rahman (1982) pp. 3, 20. This warning is echoed in Asad (1980) p.7 and Ansari (1977) p. 161



Rather, an understanding of the Qur'an in its historical context must be understood in relation to its integrated whole and definite ethos.

1.1 *Tafsir* and *Ta'wil*

Two terms are often used in Qur'anic studies in reference to hermeneutics: *tafsir* and *ta'wil*. Some scholars use both terms in the sense of 'elaboration', although others make a distinction between them, using *tafsir* (from root *'fassara'*, meaning 'to explain' or *'asfara'* meaning 'to break') to denote external philological exegesis (the 'outer' or Transhistorical meaning), while *ta'wil* (from the root *'ww-l'* meaning 'to interpret' or 'to elaborate') is taken to refer to the exposition of the subject matter, that is the 'inner' or Historical meaning. *Ta'wil* is more generally understood today to denote the rejection of the obvious meaning of a verse and the adoption of an inner interpretation; a practice most popular with Sufi and Shi'a exegesis.

Clearly, there is a strong tradition within Islam of hermeneutics, despite the reluctance to address the issue of the authorship of the Qur'an. However, the emergence of *tafsir* and *ta'wil* as a science is credit to the credibility of Islamic scholarship, especially the willingness of Islamic scholars to not only elaborate upon the work of their predecessors, but to reject it wholeheartedly. Indication here that the meaning assigned to the Qur'an by one generation need not be applicable to another generation.

2. The Contribution of Fazlur Rahman to Hermeneutics

In this chapter, a number of references have already been made concerning Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988), and his contribution in this field deserves special attention. In fact, Rahman's importance for Islamic scholarship generally cannot be underestimated, for he was a great defender for modernising Islam in the belief

that metaphysical speculation has an important role to play in the modern world, despite the prevalence of naturalistic explanations. As Rahman says:

"If metaphysics enjoys the least freedom from assumed premises, man enjoys the least freedom from metaphysics in that metaphysical beliefs are the most ultimate and pervasively relevant to human attitudes; it is consciously or unconsciously the source of all values and of the meaning we attach to life itself...Metaphysics, in my understanding, is the unity of knowledge and the meaning and orientation this unity gives to life. If this unity is the unity of knowledge, how can it be all that subjective? It is a faith grounded in knowledge."[1]

Rahman's modernist views have been very controversial: "his detractors referred to him as 'the destroyer of hadiths' because of his insistence on judging the weight of hadith reports in light of the overall spirit of the Qur'an."[2] However, "A measure of this leading thinker's impact is that wherever I travelled in the world...I have never met a Muslim scholar or other specialist on Islam who has not heard of Fazlur Rahman or who is neutral about his contributions."[3] Rahman argued that, in the modern world, there has been a serious lack of Islamic metaphysics. Even when there were many brilliant Muslim metaphysicians, during the Middle Ages, their *Weltanschauung* was mostly Hellenic, not Qur'anic. Rahman's aim was to present a Qur'anic *Weltanschauung*; an ambition Rahman claims has not been achieved in the modern world, although, Rahman claims, Muhammad Iqbal's *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* comes close.

Rahman attacks the trend of what he calls neorevivalism or neofundamentalism. Before classical modernism, there existed a revivalism, or a fundamentalism, since the eighteenth century, for example the Wahhabi movement, which desired to reconstruct Islamic spirituality and morality on the basis of a return to what was perceived as a time of 'pristine' Islam. However, neorevivalism has its basis in anti-Westernism, which consequently is also anti-modernism because of its attitude of conforming Islam with Western thought. The key issues of the neofundamentalist include the ban on bank interest, the ban on family planning, the status of women (contrary to modernist views), and zakat. What the

[1] Rahman (1982) p. 131
[2] Sonn (1995) p.408
[3] Denny (1989) p.91

neofundamentalist approach consists of, then, is attacking Western values by highlighting specific 'Islamic' issues as contrary to it. While Rahman accepts that neorevivalism has acted as a corrective for many of the modernist excesses, he condemns it for its lack of positive Islamic thinking, its intellectual bankruptcy and its use of "cliché mongering"[1] instead of serious intellectual endeavour. Whereas neorevivalism has been right to criticise traditionalist *ulama* for turning Muslims away from the Qur'an, Rahman points out that the neorevivalists can be accused of selecting various Qur'anic injunctions as a way of showing how 'different' Islam is from the West. The *ulama*, at least, can be credited for their depth of learning, however misguided, whereas the neorevivalists are "shallow and superficial"[2], and lack any roots in either the Qur'an or intellectual culture. The neorevivalist, Rahman argues, ignores the complexity of the Qur'an, seeing Islam as essentially a 'simple' religion.

Rahman also has much to say on the relationship between Islam and politics, notably his observation that in Muslim countries that claim to be democratic, such as Turkey, Islam is ruthlessly exploited for party politics and group interests that subjects Islam to, not only politics, but day-to-day politics, so that "Islam thus becomes sheer demagoguery"[3]. Politicians use the much cited view that 'Islam and politics are inseparable' to their own advantage by duping the common man into accepting that, instead of politics serving the long-term interests of Islam, Islam should serve the short-term interests of the politician.

What is Rahman's solution? Firstly, it is necessary for Muslims to make a distinction between normative (i.e. 'Transhistorical') Islam and Historical Islam. The Islamization of the Muslim mind (for Rahman sees education as the basis for Islamization) requires the resurrection of the Qur'an and Muhammad so that historical Islam may be judged by it. On the one hand, it is important to study the Qur'an's social pronouncements and legal enactments in the light of the general ethos of the text whilst, on the other hand, assessing this against the background of the historical-social milieu. Rahman responds to the concern that this will just

[1] Rahman (1982) p. 133
[2] *ibid.*
[3] *ibid* p. 135

lead to another form of fundamentalism that he has been so critical of; the Wahabbi-style return to a 'pristine Islam'. He argues that neither the fundamentalist nor the modernist had a clear enough method of interpreting the Qur'an and *sunna.* Here, Rahman appeals to *asab al-nuzul*: "It is strange...that no systematic attempt has ever been made to understand the Qur'an in the order in which it was revealed...by setting the specific cases of the... 'occasions of revelation', in some order in the general background that is no other than the activity of the Prophet (the *sunna* in the proper sense) and its social environment."[1] At the same time, this hermeneutics must not lose sight of the Qur'an as a coherent whole, of its metaphysical element that acts as a backdrop to its injunctions. This, Rahman argues, cannot lead to absolute uniformity of interpretation, but will at least get rid of claims to inconsistencies and ambiguities by understanding such verses in the light of the coherency of the whole text. Rahman sees these interpretative attempts occurring not only amongst individual scholars, but by teamwork as well. Through discussion and debate, the community at large can accept some interpretations and discard others. Further, time can allow for one-time interpretations to be replaced; they are not to remain dogma for future generations if the community feels it is no longer viable. Rahman feels that we have to adopt a fresh approach to the Qur'an, to get rid of our baggage, especially the reliance upon many *hadith*.

Secondly, Rahman calls for a reconstruction of the 'Islamic sciences'. This requires a historically systematic study of the sciences but, again, to be judged by the criterion of the Qur'an, that is the Qur'an as understood by following the criteria briefly outlined in the previous paragraph. Adopting an historical critique will lead to a reconstruction of the following 'Islamic sciences':

1. Theology. An historical critique of the theological developments in Islam is the first step towards a reconstruction of Islamic theology. By pursuing this critique, a gap should be revealed between the *Weltanschauung* of the Qur'an and the various theological schools. Rahman is critical of the theological doctrines of Sufism (in fact, Rahman seems particularly

[1] Rahman (1982) p.137

vehement and frequent in his dislike for such esotericism), the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites. He credits premodernist revivalism and modernism for undermining such doctrines but, again, is critical of them for, in the case of premodernist revivalism, not putting anything in their place and, in the case of modernism, replacing them with Western modes of thought but without giving them an Islamic basis. Rahman praises Muhammad Iqbal once more for essaying a new approach to Islamic theology, but believes that Iqbal relied too much on contemporary scientific views on subatomic theory (leading to the non-determinist view that the physical world is free of cause and effect). Although it is unavoidable for the Qur'anic *Weltanschauung* to be influenced by contemporary modes of thought (as well as it being necessary if the Qur'an is to be relevant to the contemporary situation) it should not be enslaved to any topical theory, however attractive it may seem.

2. Law and ethics. Rahman argues that Muslim scholars have never attempted an ethics of the Qur'an, systematically or otherwise, despite the fact that the Qur'an is so heavily concerned with morals. The central moral concept of the Qur'an is *taqwa*: a "mental state of responsibility from which an agent's actions proceed but which recognises that the criterion of judgement upon them lies outside him."[1] Secular law, Rahman sees as the abnegation of *taqwa*, for law has ceased to maintain any organic relation to morality. Because law is to be formulated on the basis of the Qur'an's moral values, it will necessarily be organically related to the latter. But because law governs the day-to-day life of society, it will require constant interpretation according to social change. In the past, the need for the law to keep up with society resulted in a separation between many laws and *shari'a*. For Rahman, the only way to produce genuine Islamic law is to enlighten public conscience, particularly that of the educated classes, with Islamic values. Rahman further proposes an international committee of Muslim jurists (with al-Azhar University a prime candidate for the venue) to produce works of Islamic jurisprudence

[1] Rahman (1982) p. 157

3. Philosophy. Rahman argues that philosophy, as such, cannot create any beliefs about reality and its nature, since its function is to analyse data of experience (for example, sense experience, aesthetic experience, religious experience, and so on). Therefore, philosophy is not to be seen as a rival of theology, but complementary to it, for the object of theology is to build a *Weltanschauung* on the basis of the Qur'an with the help of the intellectual tools used by philosophy. Rahman is open-minded in accepting that certain philosophical views may create tensions with certain theological views, but this is no reason to fear or ban philosophy; rather to encourage it as an important activity in the pursuit of knowledge.

4. The social sciences. These are important because they can reveal much about how collectivities behave in various fields of human belief and action. What is required is the production of works that demonstrate how societies behave and how they can be imbued with Islamic values conducive to the establishment of an ethical social order in the world. Rahman does not call for indoctrination in our schools, but nor does he support a kind of subjective humanism which would, he argues, result in turning man into nothing more than an animal, without any worthwhile values. Given that the Qur'an contains ethical content that, Rahman believes, is in line with what it means to be human, then this ethical content should be imbued in society, not dismissed under the accusation of 'indoctrination': "It is a pity of pities that the ethical content of societies is being washed out because of a general rebellion against dogmas. Dogmas, again, are not all of the same level, for there are relatively 'rational' dogmas, that is, such as are tied to the ethical content of a system."[1]

Rahman's attempt at an Islamic *Weltanschauung* is certainly ambitious and, so it turns out, far *too* ambitious. Rahman is arguably the first modern reformist Muslim scholar to link the question of the origin of the Qur'an to both its context and its interpretation. By contemporary Muslim standards his views were radical,

[1] Rahman (1982) p. 161

but he concentrated on methods of interpretation, rather than on the implications of his views on the nature of revelation for interpretation and meaning. His writings display little insight into hermeneutics as a contemporary discipline, and he is an adherent of essentialist Islam in his appeal for an 'objective' appreciation of the Qur'anic meaning. His frequent attack on Sufism is based on his belief that their appreciation of the underlying unity of the Qur'an is misplaced in that it is extrinsic; imposed from without rather than derived from a study of the Qur'an itself. While their ideas were "adapted somewhat to the Islamic milieu and expressed in Islamic terminology...this thin veneer could not hide the fact that their basic structure of ideas was not drawn from the Qur'an itself."[1] He therefore concludes that their intellectual constructs had an "artificial Islamic character."[2] Such a criticism does, however, reveal Rahman's inadequacy of his hermeneutical methodology.

For Rahman, faith leads to understanding, but he fails to acknowledge an interaction between the two. For example, he deplores Islam's subjugation to politics, rather than genuine Islamic values controlling politics, yet does not recognise the dialectical relationship between these two. His criteria of knowledge are based on the primacy of cognition, but to the detriment of praxis. He seems very dismissive of fundamentalist groups because they use Islam for political struggles, yet it is difficult to see how Islam can be divorced from the specific political struggles and still have any relevance, unless it is proposed that Islam has nothing to say on the subject of, for example, the rights of ethnic minorities. As Tracy points out, "There is no historyless, discourseless human being."[3]

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[1] Rahman (1982) p. 3
[2] *ibid.*
[3] Tracy (1987) p.107

3. The Contribution of Mohammed Arkoun to Hermeneutics

Along with Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, the exiled Egyptian scholar Mohammed Arkoun (born 1928) is an example of Muslim scholarship embracing modern hermeneutic insights and literary criticism. Whereas Rahman remains rooted in notions of an essentialist faith, Arkoun represents a radical break with traditional epistemology. In a series of works since the 1970s, Arkoun has attempted to reshape Islamic interpretation through the use of contemporary social-scientific, particularly linguistic, methods. He has embarked on "an intellectual crusade"[1] by engaging Islamic intellectuals in debate and arguing for pluralism within Islam, acceptance of multiple interpretations of the sacred texts, and a more self-conscious attitude toward one's own interpretation. Currently teaching at the Sorbonne, his writings show a great affinity with recent trends in French academic thought, especially structural linguistics, the post-structuralist writings of Paul Ricoeur and Michel Foucault, and the deconstructionism of Jacques Derrida.

Arkoun favours an historical approach to Islam:

"...the main intellectual endeavour represented by *thinking* Islam or any religion today is to evaluate, with a new epistemological perspective, the characteristics and intricacy of systems of knowledge – both the historical and the mythical."[2]

The discourse on revelation and historicity is decidedly more radical and critical than that of any other contemporary Muslim scholar. A critic of orthodoxy, he rejects the view that he is repeating the position of the *islahi*; that is the reformist thinking represented since the 19th century by the *salafi* school.

Arkoun believes we need to get away from the view of Islam as a specific, essential, unchanging system of thought, beliefs and non-beliefs. "The study of religion, in particular, is handicapped by the rigid definitions and methods

[1] Malti-Douglas (1995) p.139
[2] Arkoun (1987b) p.2

inherited from theology and classical metaphysics."[1] Arkoun insists on a historical, sociological, and anthropological approach not to conflict with the theological and philosophical, but to enrich it. Whereas Rahman's aim was to construct a *Weltanschauung*, Arkoun's aim is deconstruction. To achieve this we must start with the Qur'an because "historically, everything started with what I called the 'Experience of Medina' including the communication of the Qur'an received as revelation and the historical processes through which a social group, named believers (*mu'minun*), emerged and dominated other groups – named unbelievers, infidels, hypocrites, polytheists (*kafirun, munafiqun, mushrikun*)."[2]

Arkoun's work in terms of hermeneutics can be summarised thus:

1. Human beings emerge in societies through a variety of changing 'uses' such as activity, experience, sensation, and observation. Each 'use' in society is converted into a sign of this use and realities are expressed through languages as "systems of signs"[3]. These 'systems of signs' also include scripture, and each sign is "a locus of convergent operations [i.e., perception, expression, interpretation, translation, communication] which engages all of the relations between language and thought."[4] As a consequence, Arkoun argues that Arabic as a sacred language is no longer a tenable thesis to uphold and, further, "the core of Islamic thought is represented as a linguistic and semantic issue."[5]

2. All the signs and symbols produced by a human being during the process of his or her social and cultural emergence are inextricably bound to historicity. As the Qur'an is also a 'system of signs', this is also bound to historicity, which leads Arkoun to raise the fundamental hermeneutical question: "How can we deal with the sacred, the spiritual, the transcendent, the ontology, when we are obliged to recognise that all this

[1] Arkoun (1987b) p.3
[2] *ibid.* p.2
[3] *ibid.* p.8
[4] *ibid.*
[5] *ibid.*

vocabulary which is supposed to refer to stable, immaterial values, is submitted to the impact of history?"[1]

3. It follows that faith does not exist on its own, independent of human beings, and nor does it come from *outside*, from some divine will, but rather it is "shaped, expressed and actualised in and through discourse."[2]

4. Classical Islamic theology and Islamic jurisprudence has no epistemological relevance or legitimisation because their vocabulary is too compromised by the ideological biases imposed upon them by "the ruling class and its intellectual servants...[and] are authoritative only because they refuse to be engaged by the changing scientific environment."[3]

Arkoun analyses the process of revelation and the way the written text becomes sacred and authoritative via three levels[4]:

1. The first level is the word of God as transcendent, infinite and unknown to mankind as a whole, with only fragments of it having been revealed through the prophets. This level is expressed in the Qur'an by such expressions as *al-Lawh al-Mahfuz* (the 'well-preserved tablet') in 85:22, and the *Umm al-Kitab* (the 'archetypal book') in 43:4.

2. The second level are the historical manifestations of the word of God through the Israelite prophets (in Hebrew), Jesus of Nazareth (in Aramaic), and Muhammad (in Arabic). Despite defining scriptures as speech worded by God this does not alter the linguistic and historical fact that the message of God is transmitted in human language and collected in an orthodox, closed corpus in concrete historical conditions.

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[1] Arkoun (1988) p.70
[2] Arkoun (1987b) p.10
[3] Arkoun (1988) pp. 64-65
[4] Arkoun (1987b) p.16

3. The third level is when the textual objectification of the word of God takes place; the Qur'an, after a time of being memorised and transmitted orally, becomes a *mushaf* (written text) and the scripture is available to the believers only through the written version of the book preserved in the officially closed canons. This textual objectification, Arkoun proposes, was contingent on many historical facts depending on social and political agents, *not* on God. Some of the "imperfect human procedures"[1] which determined the shape of the written word he refers to as "oral transmission"[2], the use of "imperfect graphic form...conflicts between clans and parties...and unreported readings."[3]

There is, therefore, a two-way process going on: as the word of God descends through the levels, the interpreting community ascends in its interpretation: "The interpreting community is the subject-actant of the whole terrestrial history represented, interpreted and used as a precarious stage to prepare the salvation according to the History of Salvation narrated by God as an educative part of revelation."4 And so, the relationship between the individual and the Qur'an is inevitably also a socio-political relation to the community.

Arkoun, then, represents what Rahman is so critical of: allowing Islam to be enslaved by a topical theory. However, the 'topical theory' that Arkoun adopts, that of a deconstructionism that has its roots in Nietzsche, displays a much clearer appreciation of hermeneutic methodology and, though it may well go against the view that there is any objectivity, we are confronted with the much more coherent and intellectually viable possibility that the only kind of 'essence' we can talk about are 'collective memories'; by the Nietzschean soul. Arkoun argues that history is the actual incarnation of the revelation as it is interpreted by the *ulama* and then preserved in the collective memory. Revelation allows for the possibility of giving a 'transcendent' legitimisation to the social order and the historical process that is accepted by the social group: "But this possibility can be

[1] Arkoun (1987a) p. 5
[2] *ibid.*
[3] *ibid.*
[4] *ibid.* p.16

maintained only as long as the cognitive system, based on social *imaginaire*, is not replaced by a new, more plausible rationality linked to a different organisation of the social historical space."1

Arkoun admits to his crusade as being existential in its roots, which raises the yet-resolved problem of the role Islam is to play at all in the future of shifting paradigms. While Arkoun is critical of the predominant materialistic paradigms of the West for their lack of much in the way of a strong ethical base, he is unsure as to where the future lies in the "struggle for meaning"[2] and does not commit himself to Islam as resolving that struggle. In fact Arkoun admits he is more sympathetic to empirical research than to divine guidance, which makes one wonder whether the divine has any future at all:

"Should we Islamicize knowledge according to the revealed discourse, or should we consider Islam in the context of the universal quest for meaning? Many paths are open again. Let us explore them with confidence, hope, and lucidity."[3]

If we accept the intellectually more viable option that all our knowledge is subject to interpretation, that we are all our own 'autobiographies' when it comes to formulating any thesis, then it must also, of course, be admitted that this work is likewise an 'interpretation'; and existential exercise. There is an inevitable active participation of the interpreter in producing meaning as the receiving of text and extracting meaning from it do not exist as separate enterprises. Reception and interpretation are always partial. Nonetheless, this is far removed from saying that 'all is subjective and therefore valid', a view that neither this thesis nor Nietzsche would adhere to. In linguistic terms, this would be committing an act of 'hermeneutical promiscuity' whereby anyone is allowed to get into bed with the text. What remains to be considered is the extent to which certain interpretations, certain expressions of the will to power, are more coherent and life-enhancing than others. Further, in attempting to determine what we can say about Islam in terms of its political philosophy, the reader must look towards the Islamic collective consciousness, to the series of paradigms that have moulded the socio-

[1] Arkoun (1987b) in Kurzman (1998) p. 220
[2] *ibid*
[3] *ibid* p.221

historical context of what we call 'Islam'. *Accepting the diversity of Islam does not alter the fact that paradigms do exist.*

In the "struggle for meaning" the Qur'an is, of course, crucial, but Muhammad is also a key agent: "To get to the 'true meaning' of the text, as intended by God, many Muslims would, in effect, ask: 'What did Muhammad understand by this text?" This, then, is one direction we must take, but we must go even deeper than that for, to understand the mind of the Prophet – in the same way we must understand the mind of God via the Prophet – we must consider the social, historical and cultural milieu at the time, for the Prophet is a product of the city, of Mecca, as well as of the desert, of the time of *Jahiliyya*.

The undisputed reference point for Muslims is the Qur'an and, for Sunni Muslims, the Prophet's *sunna*, and these remain the criteria to determine Transhistorical Islam. However, the past is not the 'past' as such, but partakes in the present. In interpreting a tradition such as Islam, an understanding of its meaning is not value-free. Every interpreter enters into the process of interpretation with some pre-understanding and presuppositions regarding that tradition, for "There is no innocent interpretation, no innocent interpreter, no innocent text."[1] Any attempt at understanding is conditioned by "The radical plurality of our differential languages and the ambiguity of all our histories."[2]

Any act of interpretation is a participation in the linguistic-historical process, and the shaping of tradition and this participation occurs at a particular time and a particular place, whether this be an engagement with the Qur'an or with the *sunna* of the Prophet, or with the early history of Islam – the 'Golden Age Narrative' – the interpreter remains within a 'prison' of language, culture and tradition. Much of reformist thinking in Islam argues that Muslims must return to a 'pristine Islam' and bracket those intervening years. Yet how is this really possible? In terms of 'going back to the Qur'an', as has been demonstrated in this chapter, exegesis of a text cannot be entirely independent of its historical productivity.

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[1] Tracy (1987) p.79
[2] *ibid.* p.82

Likewise, a 'return' to a 'Golden Age' supposes that this 'Golden Age' is some disembodied phenomenon floating around, waiting to be plucked from the sky. It is not possible to simply 'bracket' or bypass the intervening years, to return to the womb once one has been born. Arkoun's heuristic methodology, in contrast to that of Rahman, is rooted in pluralism. He argues that the similarities in the theological and intellectual developments among the Abrahamic religions should be the new basis for dialogue.[1] However, there is a danger that pluralism leads to convenient subjectivism; if it is *convenient* to interpret Islam as democratic, then it is democratic, if it is *convenient* to interpret Islam as supporting women's rights, then it is supporting women's rights. On the other hand, going down the fundamentalist road in the search for singular truths lacks intellectual credibility.

How much freedom do we have to interpret the meaning of a tradition? The temptation is strong, as an intellectual exercise, to pluck out a few selective *ayats* from the Qur'an, a few convenient *hadiths*, a series of historical precedents and then build up an argument for, say, Islam's compatibility with animal rights. It would certainly be a *hard* task but not, one suspects, impossible. But this is not a fundamentalist thesis, it is not in the business of picking and choosing to suit the circumstances. Rather, it is an attempt to establish a basis for 'truth', and 'truth' in the Nietzschean sense. Faced with a number of paradigms, of Islamic archetypes, and an armoury of empirical sources, what can we conclude concerning Islam and its political motivation?

4. The Qur'an as an ethical ought.

To what extent can we interpret the Qur'an as proposing an ethical ought? That is, what does it require of the believer in terms of duty, morality and, more specifically, political obligation? There are certain terms, contained within the Qur'an which need to be surveyed in more detail. They are: *taqwa* (responsibility and awareness in relation to the presence of God); *tawhid* (unity of God); *al-nas*

[1] Arkoun (1987a)

(the people); *al-mustad'afun fi'l-ard* (the oppressed of the earth); *'adl* and *qist* (balance and justice); and *jihad* (struggle).

1. Taqwa. The word '*taqwa*' is from the Arabic root *w-q-y*, which literally means 'to ward off, 'to guard against', 'to heed', and 'to preserve', and it has been used in all these senses in the Qur'an.[1] In the Qur'anic sense, it may be defined as 'heeding the voice of your conscience while being aware that you are responsible to God.' According to Jafri, among all the ethical terms contained in the Qur'an, "the most widely applicable and most inclusive of all is the term *taqwa*".[2] Man's responsibility rests not only towards God, but also to the whole of humankind.[3] The Qur'an links *taqwa* to belief in God[4] and regards its attainment as one of the objectives of serving God[5]. Those who have *taqwa* are compared favourably with those who prefer more short-term goals[6]. However, what is most important in this context is the Qur'an's link between *taqwa* and various forms of social interaction, notably sharing[7], fulfilling covenants[8], and kindness[9]. After the injunction to 'fear God'[10] (*taqwa*), the Qur'an then goes on to say: "Let there become of you a nation that shall call for righteousness, enjoin justice, and forbid evil. Such men will surely triumph."[11]

2. Tawhid. From the root *w-h-d*, *tawhid* means 'to be alone', 'one', 'an integrated unity'. *Tawhid* has been described as "the foundation, the centre and the end of the entire [Islamic] ritual."[12] In terms of politics, the term *tawhid* has been used more frequently during the last few decades amongst political exponents. Foremost among those who have advocated tawhid as a comprehensive socio-political worldview are Ali Shari'ati and the Mujahidin-i-Khalq of Iran. They contrast *tawhid*, a 'worldview', with the narrow-mindedness associated with, for

[1] See, for example, 3:25, 120
[2] Jafri (1980) p.127
[3] 92:4-10; 49:13
[4] 10:63; 27:53; 41:18
[5] 2:21
[6] 4:77; 6:32; 12:57
[7] 92:5; 7:152-3
[8] 3:76; 7:52
[9] 3:172; 4:126; 5:93; 16:127
[10] 3:102
[11] 3:104
[12] Royster (1987) p.28

example, exploitation, consumerism, and class distinctions. A 'spirit of *tawhid'*, it is argued, encourages the communal feeling of justice, people's liberation, and *taqwa*. In terms of Qur'anic interpretation, it is the adoption of Rahman's hermeneutics as seeing the text as a whole, it is the 'spirit' of the Qur'an.

3. al-Nas From the root *n-w-s*, *nas* refers to 'the people' as a social collective, as 'humankind', which is placed in a "world of *tawhid* where God, people and nature display a meaningful and purposeful harmony."[1] Humankind is considered central in the Qur'an, for God has chosen humanity to act as His viceregents[2] on earth, and has God's 'spirit'.[3] Humanity is the recipient of great trust,[4] as well as the wielder of great power[5]. The term 'the people' has been used as a rallying call for suppressed Muslim minorities[6], although the extent to which viceregency means political sovereignty is a debatable one.

4. *al-mustad'afun fi 'l-ard* From the root *d-'-f*, *mustad'af* refers to someone who is oppressed or is deemed weak and of no consequence and, therefore, treated in an arrogant manner. The *mustad'afun* are, therefore, those people who have an 'inferior' status in society and are vulnerable, marginalized and/or oppressed in the socio-economic sense. The term needs to be distinguished from other terms used to describe the lower and impoverished classes: for example, *aradhil* (marginalized)[7], *fuqara'* (poor)[8], and *masakin* (indigent)[9]. What distinguishes the *mustad'afun* is that they are in a position of weakness as a result of the behaviour or policies of the arrogant and powerful (*mustakbirun*). The Qur'an makes a number of contrasts between the *mustad'afun* and the *mustakbirun*, giving favour to the former over the latter. One of the most often-quoted verses in the Qur'an by those oppressed has been the following:

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[1] Shariati (1980) p.86
[2] 2:30
[3] 15:29; 32:9; 38:72
[4] 33:72
[5] 4:32-3; 16:12-15
[6] For example, during apartheid in South Africa. See Esack (1997)
[7] 11:27; 26:70; 22:5
[8] 2:271; 9:60
[9] 2:83, 177; 4:8

"But it was Our will to favour those who are oppressed (*mustad'afun*) and to make them leaders among men, to bestow on them a noble heritage and to give them power in the land; and to inflict on Pharoah, Haman, and their warriors, the very scourge they dreaded."[1]

This verse is from the chapter *al-Qasas* ('The Story'), which tells of the flight of the Israelites from oppression in Egypt, and is regarded as an example of God's favouritism for the oppressed, irrespective of their faith.

5. *'adl and qist* The Qur'an uses two terms to refer to justice: *'adl* and *qist*. *'Adl* means "to act equitably, justly or rightly"[2], whereas qist (root, *q-s-t*) means 'equity', 'justice' or "to give someone his or her full portion"[3]. Both terms are used interchangeably in the Qur'an with justice forming the basis of the natural order of the world: "God created the heavens and the earth to manifest the truth, and to reward each soul according to its deeds. None shall be wronged."[4] Justice, here, is equated with truth[5], and its understanding can be seen on the basis of *tawhid* in the following:

"It is the Merciful who has taught the Qur'an. He created man and taught him articulate speech. The sun and the moon pursue their ordered course. The plants and the trees bow down in adoration. He raised the heaven on high and set the balance of all things, that you might not transgress that balance. Give just weight and full measure."[6]

These verses place mankind and the task of doing justice within the context of a responsibility towards God (*taqwa*) and the order which exists in the universe (*tawhid*). God sees injustice as a deviation from the natural order, not unlike Aquinas' natural law. However, like the natural law theory of ethics, we are confronted with the problem of 'what *is* justice'? Can this be determined through a holistic hermeneutic of the text?

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[1] 28:5
[2] Lane (1980)
[3] *ibid.*
[4] 45:22
[5] also 39:69
[6] 55:1-10

6. _Jihad_ *Jihad* literally means 'to struggle' or 'to exert oneself', although it has also come to mean the "sacralization of combat"[1]. The Qur'an itself uses the term in various contexts, including warfare[2], but also as a spiritual struggle[3]. *Jihad* assumes that human life is essentially a practical matter, for the theology will follow later. Although the term is often used – and is better known as such in the West – as referring to warfare, it is also commonly used by oppressed Muslims who associate the term with fighting against oppression and injustice; in this sense *jihad* is equated with *adl* and *qist.*

7. _Iman and kufr_ *Iman* and *kufr* are the two most frequently invoked terms in the Qur'an. *Iman* means 'faith' or 'belief' whereas *kufr* means its opposite (i.e. 'disbelief'). In Muslim discourse, *iman* has been replaced by *islam*, although the latter term only occurs eight times in the Qur'an, compared with forty-five times for *iman*. Further, the correlative of *iman*, *mu'min* occurs, in its various forms, forty times. These terms are extremely important in modern discourse because of the way they are used in any issue of inter-faith dialogue or discussions on pluralism. In this respect, they are highly relevant to this thesis. Ultimately, the question that needs to be considered is what is meant by *iman* and *kufr* in terms of specific groups, and the degree to which they are mutually exclusive.

A case may be made that the way the terms *iman* and *kufr* are used today differs somewhat from the way they were understood originally. Today's understanding is usually taken as *iman* equalling Muslim and *kufr* meaning non-Muslim; labels that are set in stone and not allowing any degree of flexibility, fluidity or change. However, a number of scholars, adopting the hermeneutic approach of reading the terms in the context of the time the Qur'an was uttered, have attempted to show that these terms are qualities that are dynamic and variable, rather than entrenched.

Wilfred Cantwell-Smith presents God as a being who is "concerned with something that persons do, and with the persons who do it, rather than with

[1] Schleifer (1982) p.122
[2] 4:90; 25:52; 9:41
[3] 29:8; 31:15

abstract entity [called belief]."[1] In line with the Islamic tenet of *taqwa* and *jihad* especially, it cannot be sufficient to be a good Muslim merely by a product of birth. Further, in line with the tenet of *adl* and *qist,* the non-Muslim cannot be condemned merely for being a non-Muslim. In fact, the idea that the Qur'anic *islam* is not specific to the Muslim has many sympathisers amongst Islamic scholars; the acknowledgement of the potential to submit to 'God' in their own way, and outside of the institution of Islam, has a number of supporters, for example Sayyidain[2], Talbi[3], Engineer[4], Hanafi[5], Rahman[6], Ayoub[7], and Faruqi[8] to name but a few. The best summary of this view is provided by Troll who states that a number of scholars acknowledge that,

"primordial and universal *islam*, i.e. the attitude of surrender to the Absolute in co-fraternity, can be discerningly discovered and acknowledged in the most varied symbols and patterns of belief and action, in the religions and ideologies of the past and present...Any sincere response to the call from the hidden Mystery, the source of existence, realizes existential and personal *islam*."[9]

Now, of course, "existential and personal *islam*" suggests a coat of many colours, although we can see here an awareness of the distinction between Historical Islam and the Transhistorical (or "primordial"). Further, as the Qur'an clearly denounces the *kufr* in numerous passages, we need to be clear as to who then would count as '*kufr*' in the "primordial", or Transhistorical, sense, which we will come back to later on.

4.1 *Iman*

Before that, an attempt can be made to put the Qur'an within the context of the time it was recited by the Prophet by considering a possible interpretation of the word '*iman*' (and its noun *mu'minun*), rather than what the modern world

[1] Cantwell-Smith (1991) p.111
[2] Sayyidain (1972)
[3] Talbi (1981, 1985)
[4] Engineer (1982)
[5] Hanafi (1988)
[6] Rahman (1983, 1988)
[7] Ayoub (1989, 1991)
[8] Faruqi (1983)
[9] Troll (1987) p.15

understands by 'Muslim'. A key section of the Qur'an, in this respect, is the following, as it is the most explicit in defining a *mu'min*:

"The true believers [*mu'minun*] are those whose hearts are filled with awe at the mention of God, and whose faith [*iman*] grows stronger as they listen to His revelations [*ayat*]. They are those who put their trust in their Lord, pray steadfastly, and bestow in alms from that which we have given them. Such are the true believers [*mu'minun*]. They will be exalted and forgiven by their Lord, and a generous provision shall be made for them."[1]

Firstly, this section talks of the "true believers", which suggests there are various 'grades' of believers; therefore it is not enough simply to be born a '*mu'min*' or to proclaim submission to Allah, but to be a "true believers" is related to the *acts* that one does. *Iman*, then, is a dynamic quality that can be increased or strengthened. There is a close relationship between *iman* and righteous deeds, specifically in this case, a trust in God, constant prayer and the giving of alms. This text is at the beginning of the *sura* 'The Spoils of War' which deals largely with the event of the Battle of Badr (623). This passage is widely regarded as a rebuke to some of Muhammad's Companions who desired more of the spoils of war than Muhammad considered fit. After being told that the spoils belong to the community as a whole the Companions were reminded about the nature of faith, which was being weakened because of their greed.

In terms of its etymology, *iman* is the verbal noun of the fourth form from the root *a-m-n*. The root implies 'being secure', 'trusting in', or 'turning to', from which follows its meanings of 'good faith', 'sincerity', 'fidelity', and 'loyalty'. The fourth form, *amana*, has the twofold meaning of 'to believe' and 'to give one's faith'.[2] Its principal meaning is "becoming true to the trust with respect to which God has confided in one by a firm believing with the heart; not by profession of belief with the tongue only"[3]

The term, together with its variations, occurs over two hundred times in the Qur'an, most frequently as part of the expression, 'O those who have *iman*' (fifty-

[1] Qur'an 8:2-4
[2] Esack (1997) p. 117
[3] Lane (1980) I, p.7

five times). In the majority of cases, it refers to followers of Muhammad, however it also refers to Moses and his followers in eleven cases, and to other prophets and their followers in twenty-two cases. As Rahman states, "*iman* is an act of the heart, a decisive giving oneself up to God and His message and gaining peace and security and fortification against tribulation."[1]

The degree to which *iman* is a dynamic phenomenon has been much debated by scholars, which included an attempt by Abu Hanifa to use Aristotelian logic that *iman* itself is not subject to increase or decrease, but that its weakening is an increase in *kufr*, while its strengthening is a decrease in *kufr*, thus simultaneously allowing you to be both a believer and non-believer![2] There are two *hadiths* narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim: "The least of *iman* will save one in the hereafter" and "*Iman* is of [various] kinds and has seventy branches. The highest is the testimony that there is no deity except God and the lowest is the removal of an obstacle from the road. And [even] modesty is a branch of faith."[3] The vast majority of Muslims, it is considered, do not satisfy the criteria set out in Qur'an 8:2-4, yet they still have *iman*. Therefore, it exists at different levels, and is dependent upon the social and personal encounters and actions of the individual. What is interesting is the requirement to act in a certain manner, to avoid various wrongs and live in the spirit that the Qur'an inculcates – even if this is just removing obstacles from the road – rather than subscribe wholeheartedly to a set of traditions and rituals. *Iman* is an active attribute of character in direct contrast with the opposite activity, *kufr*, for, "the context of the term 'they rejected' (*kufr*) show that according to the Qur'an, to 'disbelieve' is an active attitude to life as a whole...the opposite of *iman* is an active attribute of character, the attitude of heedlessness and scorn and pride."[4]

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[1] Rahman (1983) p.171
[2] Second article of the Wasiyyat Abi Hanifah, see Esack (1997) p. 119-120
[3] Quoted from Esack (1997) p.120
[4] Izutsu (1966) p.119-120

4.2 *Kufr*

A better understanding of what is meant by *iman* can be ascertained by contrasting it with its opposite, *kufr*, (root *k-f-r*) best illustrated in the following verse:

"Those that deny God's revelations [i.e. *kufr*] and slay the prophets unjustly and kill the men who preach fair dealing – warn them of a woeful scourge. Their works shall come to nothing in this world and the hereafter, and there shall be none to help them."[1]

The *kufr*, here, are those who "kill the men who preach fair dealing" (justice), and so is making a link with the socio-political acts of everyday discourse. The expression "those that deny God's revelations" is one of a number of ways of describing the 'non-believer' in the Qur'an using some form of the word *kufr*. Other forms are the participle noun *kafir*, and its plural, *kuffar* or *kafirun*. The term *kufr* has become in Muslim discourse the term most associated with what is disliked in the 'Other', the 'non-believer', and has become a term of abuse in many languages. A *kafir* has come to mean someone who, having "received God's benevolence, shows no sign of gratitude in his conduct, or even acts rebelliously against his benefactor."[2] In fact, Isutzu has shown that while the word *kafir* itself contains an important element of non-belief, "it must be remembered, that this is not the only basic semantic constituent of the word, nor is it the original one"[3] that, in fact, the "real core...of its semantic structure was not 'un-belief', but rather 'ingratitude' or 'unthankfulness'."[4]

There are many examples in the Qur'an where the word is used to refer to ingratitude[5], and most frequently it is used as the opposite of *iman* which has led Isutzu to claim that the word *kafir* came to mean unbeliever "because it occurs very frequently in contrast to the word *mu'min*"[6] and if "the nature of a word is such that it comes to be used with remarkable frequency in specific contexts

[1] 3:21-2
[2] Isutzu (1996) p.120
[3] *ibid.*, p.126
[4] *ibid.*
[5] For example, 2:153; 14:7, 15; 26:57, 85; 26:18; 27:40; 29:66; 30:33; 39:7
[6] Isutzu (1996) p.26

alongside its antonym, it must of necessity acquire a noticeable semantic value from this frequent combination."[1] However, even if *kufr* acts as an antonym to *iman*, this is still considered a conscious attitude and an act; one is not simply a non-believer by not being born a Muslim. As Muhammad Asad has pointed out:

"...the term *kafir* cannot be simply equated, as many Muslim theologians of post-classical times and practically all Western translators of the Qur'an have done, with 'unbeliever' or 'infidel' in the specific, restricted sense of one who rejects the system of doctrine and law promulgated in the Qur'an and amplified by the teachings of the Prophet – but must have a wider, more general meaning."[2]

Interestingly, in the more widely used sense of the term '*kafir*' as 'rejecter of the faith', this was first applied to some Meccans who insulted Muhammad and, later in Medina, to various elements of the People of the Book as well. In this sense, *kufr* is more of an attitude, such as arrogance, insulting behaviour, oppression, injustice and so on.[3] It is not merely passive, but refers to those who, for example, committed actual or attempted assassinations of the Prophets[4], or attempted to destroy Muhammad's mission[5], or refused to spend their wealth on the poor[6], or opposed the weak[7], or remained silent in the face of evil and oppression[8]. Therefore, in this sense, a *mu'min* can also be a *kafir*!

However, it would be going too far to suggest that one can be a non-believer in God and still, because of actions committed, be a *mu'min*, for *kufr* does also relate to the denial of the teachings of the Qur'an, which broadly would include the unity of God (*tawhid*), the scripture as the word of God, the signs of God, the resurrection, and the prophets. More specifically, the Qur'an denounces as *kufr* notions of the divinity of Christ[9], and any attempt to attribute to God a begotten son.[10] This is problematic, to say the least, as it seems to declare all Christians as

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[1] Isutzu (1996) p.26
[2] Asad (1980) p.907
[3] Esack (1997) p.137
[4] 4:155; 5:70; 8:30
[5] 6:26; 7:45; 8:36
[6] 2:254; 3:179; 9:34, 35; 41:7
[7] 4:168; 14:13
[8] 5:79
[9] 4:171; 5:17
[10] 19:91-2; 9:30

kafirun, and it really depends upon how far one is prepared to go in ascribing the hermeneutical approach to the Qur'an. We may be generous and agree with Esack that,

"It is impossible to separate the *kufr* denounced in the Qur'an from the personal and social attitudes of Muhammad's opponents as individuals or a group in Mecca or Medina. We have to try to find exactly where we see such attitudes to *islam* and such patterns of socio-political behaviour in order to develop a contemporary application of the term *kufr* and not the mere transference of labels."[1]

A reasonable case can be made for this, and Esack does so on the following grounds:

1. Whenever the Qur'an links *kufr* to the teachings it does so within a socio-historical context. At the time of Muhammad, a belief in the unity of God was indelibly linked to the idea of humanism, social, and economic justice. Therefore, anti-monotheism was akin to a denial of a right and justice community: "In the light of the argument that beliefs and the consequences of holding them are always intrinsically connected, one cannot refer to *kufr*, or any other notion, as 'purely doctrinal'. This would be affording doctrine an ahistroical sense which is not borne out by the very dynamic interplay of revelation and society."[2]

2. The Qur'an portrays the *kafir* as someone who, despite having recognised the unity of God and Muhammad as His Prophet, still refuses to acknowledge it; it is a recognition of a truth, but prefer to 'conceal' it.[3]

3. The Qur'an denounces as *kufr* those who show an antagonism for the kind of society/community Muhammad was attempting to create. 'Islam', in this sense, is a reference to a community of people who believe in the ethical spirit of the Qur'an and, therefore, the *kufr* are those who are 'unethical'.

[1] Esack (1997) p.139
[2] *ibid.*
[3] *ibid.*

4. Finally, the *kuffar* are the way they are because of essentially selfish motives; whether it be because of narrow minded material gains, tribal bonds, or because *islam* would upset the unjust social order that existed at the time. Therefore, it is an attack on people who are guided by selfish motives.

4.3 Islam

The importance of a hermeneutical approach to the text (and, later, the tradition) is evident, for it would be remiss to assume that the Islam of the seventh century is exactly as the Islam of today, or that the audience that was being addressed at the time had the same outlook as the audience of today. However, attempting to enter the world of seventh-century Arabia is no straightforward matter and it must be re-iterated here that there is always an element of the writer in any writing, however objective and dispassionate the author may claim to be. Considering the possibilities before us of a hermeneutical understanding of *iman* and *kufr*, it allows for a rethinking of what is meant by the term '*islam*', particularly within the context of *din*. Echoing Jane Smith who stated that there has been a "historical flow, involving both movement and continuity, that takes us from the *islam* meant to what it 'has meant' and what it 'means'."[1] We are dealing with a term for which there is "dynamic, both within the understanding of individual writers and as expressed by the historical development of the concept from one age to another."[2]

There is a distinction that is so often ignored in any study of Islam, yet should be blatantly obvious. That the '*islam*' that was referred to in the Qur'an was for a living, vibrant and changing community that were undergoing significant and radical changes during the process of the use of the word '*islam*'; in that sense '*islam*' was a changing, flexible entity undergoing historical change. When pinpointing the use of the word '*islam*' and, by extension any other term for that

[1] Smith (1975) p.222-3
[2] *ibid.*

matter, this must be borne in mind, yet most interpreters have adopted the term as if it applied to a complete and stable entity; to a community of believers that were certain in their beliefs and complete in every respect. Further, the way terms were used at the time would have been understood within the context of a series of 'givens' that are not applicable – or even known – today. Islam, then, should be seen merely through Transhistorical spectacles, but more importantly through the Historical; as a community in its nascent stage which had certain seventh-century Arabian assumptions and beliefs: "the Qur'an is engaged in a dynamic relationship with its hearers; it speaks and uses expressions in terms of the understanding of a community or individuals at a particular stage of their development."[1]

At this point, a most *a propos* section of the Qur'an comes to mind:

"Righteousness does not consist in whether you face the East or the West. The righteous man is he who believes in God and the Last Day, in the angels and the Book and the prophets; who, though he loves it dearly, gives away his wealth to kinsfolk, to orphans, to the destitute, to the traveller in need and to beggars, and for the redemption of captives; who attends to his prayers and renders the alms levy; who is true to his promises and steadfast in trial and adversity and in times of war. Such are the true believers; such are the God-fearing."[2]

It is not enough to be born a Muslim, and it is not a sin to be born a non-Muslim. Come the Last Day, "Whoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it also."[3] Individuals, as well as groups, are changing entities and must be measured according to the deeds they do. In this sense, concepts such as *kufr*, *iman* and *islam* are interrelated and dynamic: "Every new encounter with ourselves and others, every deed we do or refuse to do, is a step in our perpetual transformation."[4]

[1] Esack (1997) p.129
[2] 2:177
[3] 99:8
[4] Esack (1997) p.144

5. Defining the Other

What, then, is the attitude of the Muslim to the 'Other' in the Qur'an? To begin with, it is not easy to determine the various meanings of the terms used. As has been demonstrated, the most frequent expressions used in the Qur'an to describe different 'types' are: *mu'minun*, the 'People of the Book', 'Jews', 'Christians', 'associationists', the *kafirun/kuffar*, and the *munafiqun*. The Qur'an does not have an equivalent of the words 'non-Muslim' or 'unbeliever' as such, despite these being the most common translations of *kafirun/kuffar*. Further, the terms *mu'minun*, 'People of the Book', 'Jews', and 'Christians' are all used interchangeably in the Qur'an. Also, reference to these various grouping is sometimes to a specific community within a historical setting, and other times to the community in the general, Transhistorical sense.

In terms of the People of the Book, it seems that Muhammad, in his early Meccan days, had no enmity towards Jews or Christians and "he regarded the contents of the message he brought as substantially the same as that received years ago by the Jews on the Sinai."[1] According to the Constitution of Medina (see Chapter Six), the following extract gives an indication of how the questions of belief were handled: "The Jews of Banu 'Awf will be a community with the *mu'minun*; the Jews shall have their religion and the Muslims theirs, their allies and their persons shall be safe except for those who behave unjustly, for they hurt but themselves and their families."[2] According to Muslim accounts, however, many Jews secretly allied themselves with the Quraysh and, together with breaches in the treaty and attempts on the life of Muhammad, led to the expulsion of the Jewish tribes. Therefore, it was not due to religious reasons.

Although Christians were not, on the whole (if at all), a presence in Medina, they are an important part of the Qur'anic makeup. Muhammad had met Christian ascetics on his business travels, most notably the Syrian monk known as Bahira, and there were Christian slaves and visiting traders to Mecca. Further, the

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[1] Rodinson (1980) p.158
[2] cited in al-'Umari (1991) 1, p. 107

Muslim flights to Abyssinia, an established Christian state by that time, certainly seemed to leave a positive impression on the Muslims. Theologically, Muslim understanding of Christian doctrine seemed to be dependent on the Jewish community in Medina, at least until the arrival of a Christian delegation from Najran in southern Arabia in 632. Although they did not recognise Muhammad's prophethood they, nonetheless, prayed in the mosque and would pay taxes in return for Muslim protection, thus attaining *dhimmi* status. This community continued to survive for at least another two hundred years.[1]

The reasons why there is so much emphasis on the People of the Book – as opposed to other religions – needs to be considered. Obviously, an important reason is the Qur'an's (and Muhammad's) claim of affinity with those of the 'Abrahamic tradition' which, in itself, caused tension in the early Muslim community because of the accentuation of the differences between them, as well as the claim that the Qur'an is the final and 'correct' revelation, which, by implication, places other revelations (or, rather, the passing down of these revelations) at a lower status in the hierarchy. Much of the Qur'an is inevitably devoted to this tension because of its prevalence during the formative period of Islam. A further reason for this dominance is that the Christians and Jews were the two religions that Muslims encountered in their dealings during Muhammad's prophethood. An additional reason for the focus on the People of the Book in the modern world is that it is largely 'Christian' (European and American) and 'Jewish' (Israeli) people that Muslims find themselves in conflict with and so look for references to the People of the Book in the Qur'an for theological advice.

However, there are a number of problems with associating the People of the Book during early Islam with the Christians and Jews of today:

1. The Qur'an naturally dealt only with those of the People of the Book with whom the early Muslim community came into contact with. To extract the Jews and Christians of the Arab world of the seventh century and to apply it to Jews and Christians of today is to ignore the Qur'anic context. As an

[1] Trimingham (1979) p.307

example, the Qur'an accuses Christians of *shirk* because of their alleged worship of three deities[1], although this may well be due to a misunderstanding of what was meant by the doctrine of the Trinity by confusing it with Tritheism[2]. Alternatively, it could well be that the Christians themselves had a different conception of the Trinity than that understood today and so it was not misunderstood at all. Christianity, it must be remembered, has also been flexible and undergone many changes both in time and in its greater insistence on dogmatic universality. At the time Muhammad was alive, there were far more different types of Christians – and Jews – which is understandable considering the isolation and lack of centrality these communities experienced.

2. In none of the disciplines of exegesis, Islamic history or in legal scholarship have Muslims achieved anything near a consensus concerning the identity of the People of the Book. At various times, Hindus, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Magians, and Sabaeans have been included as People of the Book, dependent upon the interpretation of Muslim scholars and, more importantly, the geo-political context.

It should, however, be pointed out that, historically speaking, Islam has not in practice always been so liberal minded and pluralistic. On the positive side, Luis Gómez has pointed out:

"For a long time scholars have debated the causes for the decline of Buddhism in India. Although there is little chance of agreement on a problem so complex – and on which we have precious little evidence – some of the reasons adduced early are no longer widely accepted. For instance, the notion that Tantric Buddhism was a 'degenerate form' of Buddhism that controlled to or brought about the disappearance of Buddhism is no longer entertained by the scholarly community. The image of a defenceless, pacifist Buddhist community annihilated by invading hordes of Muslim warriors is perhaps also a simplification. Though the Turkish conquerors of India were far from benevolent, the Arabs who occupied Sindh in 711 seem to have accepted a state of peaceful coexistence with the local population. Furthermore, one must still understand why Jainism and

[1] 4:171-3; 5:72-3

[2] Kung (1987), pp. 90ff.; Watt (1978) pp. 21-2; Basetti-Sani (1967) pp. 188-93. Mention could also be made of the Unitarians, who also regard themselves as Christians but reject the notion of the Trinity

Hinduism survived the Muslim invasion while Buddhism did not...The disappearance of Buddhism in India may have been precipitated by the Muslim invasion, but it was caused primarily by internal factors, the most important of which seems to have been the gradual assimilation of Buddhism into Hinduism."[1]

Kulke and Rothermund emphasise that Indian culture was enriched by the encounter of Islam which opened up new connections with West Asia. Indeed, the Islamic countries of the West transmitted ideas to Europe such as the Indian numerical system and, of course, the game of chess. During the ninth and tenth century, Muslim rulers "seem to have followed a policy of peaceful coexistence with the Hindu population. It is said that the rulers of Multan even carefully protected the temple of the sun god at Multan..." However, in the year 1000, this peaceful coexistence came to an end when the Afghan Mahmud of Ghazni made a series of raids into northern India, resulting in the looting and destruction of the holy places:

"The climax of these systematic campaigns was Mahmud's attack on the famous Shiva temple at Somnath on the southern coast of Kathiawar in Gujarat. After a daring expedition across the desert Mahmud reached this temple in 1025. Chronicles report that about 50,000 Hindus lost their lives in defending the temple. Mahmud destroyed the Shiva lingam with his own hands and then is said to have returned through the desert with about 20 million gold dinars (about 6.5 tons of gold)."[2]

Mahmud has had a lasting impact on Indian history and "signifies the very embodiment of wanton destruction and fanaticism – much like Attila and Chingis Khan for the Europeans."[3] Curiously, Mahmud showed no interest in establishing an empire in India, although he quite probably was capable of doing so. Rather he used the loot to turn his capital, Ghazni, into one of the finest cities of its day, surrounding his court with scholars and poets. Further, Mahmud did not limit his military attacks against Hindus only, being quite prepared to kill Muslims he regarded as heretics, such as the Ismailis who lived peacefully in Multan. It was not until the end of the twelfth century, however, that almost the whole of northern India was conquered and came under the rule of Muhammad of Ghur.

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[1] Gómez (1989) p.95
[2] Kulke (1998) p.154
[3] *ibid.*

Under Muslim rule, the military were a better match against the Mongols – who started to appear in the thirteenth century – than the Hindu princes. Notably, Ala-ud-din, who ascended the throne in 1296 and wanted to be the second Alexander, fought successfully against hordes of Mongol invaders and, indeed, proved to be as cruel in revenge as the Mongols themselves. After an attempt to conquer Delhi, thousands of Mongol prisoners were trampled to death by elephants while the sultan's court watched and a pyramid composed of the heads of the Mongols was erected outside the Delhi city gates. Ala-ud-din also invaded southern India, burning down cities and destroying great Hindu temples such as Srirangam.[1] However,

"Although Ala-ud-din had the indisputable merit of having saved India from being overrun by the Mongols, the Hindus naturally disliked him because he oppressed them intentionally. Hindu historians have, therefore, criticised him just as they criticised Aurangzeb. But they tend to forget that Ala-ud-din was rather impartial in his oppression, his measures being aimed at Muslim courtiers just as much as against Hindu notables and middlemen."

Finally, in terms of brutality, mention must also be made of Timur (1336-1405)[2] who saw himself as the scourge of Allah. Timur, a Turk, grew up in the Mongol Chaghaytay state in Samarkind and he seized power over the declining Chaghaytay empire. Wishing Passionate about the Mongol ideal, by 1387 he had conquered all the Iranian highlands and the plains of Mesopotamia. In 1395 he subjugated the old Golden Horde in Russia, and in 1398 he descended upon India and sacked Delhi:

"For three days Timur's soldiers indulged in an orgy of murder and plunder in the Indian capital. The Hindu population was exterminated; the Muslims were spared, although presumably their property was not. The deeds of these Turkish warriors shocked even Timur, who wrote in his autobiography that he was not responsible for this terrible event and that only his soldiers should be blamed."[3]

Why is the Qur'an so insistent on monotheism? Within the Meccan/Medinan context, there was a close association made between orthodoxy and orthopraxis: the rejection and ignorance of Allah was what led to economic and social

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[1] Kulke (1998) p.160
[2] Better known in the West as Tamburlaine
[3] Kulke (1998) p.167

oppression in Mecca. Monotheism equals community, unity and selflessness. There are many Qur'anic references here[1], but *sura* 90 seems most appropriate:

"Does he think that none has power over him? 'I have squandered vast riches!' he boasts. Does he think that none observes him? Have We not given him two eyes, a tongue, and two lips, and shown him the two paths? Yet he would not scale the Height. Would that you knew what the Height is. It is the freeing of a bondsman; the feeding, in the day of famine, of an orphaned relation or a needy man in distress; to have faith and enjoin fortitude and mercy."[2]

Here it is asserted that a denial of Allah causes people to squander their riches and that faith in an all-powerful God is directly linked with an active social conscience. Those who will "scale the Height" are those that have rejected Allah and, therefore, deny mercy and compassion. What is highly significant is that although the Jews were much closer to Muslims in terms of creed than, for example, the Sabaeans (who were believed to have worshipped stars and angels), the former are often denunciated whereas the latter are included amongst the People of the Book. This is another example whereby practice is actually more important than orthodoxy; the Sabaeans, in their actions, are worthy of being called People of the Book whereas the Jews (that is, the historical Jews of Medina) through their deceit and treachery are unworthy of the title. Such actions of dishonesty are not as a result of the doctrine, but a misunderstanding of the doctrine by those who claim to be following their Scriptures, but in actual fact are not: "There are illiterate men among them who, ignorant of the Scriptures, know of nothing but lies and vague fancies"[3] Hence a close association between sin and ignorance and the much-stressed call for knowledge and understanding.

The Qur'an is quite explicit in denouncing religious exclusivism, which appears to have been characterised by the Jewish and Christian communities encountered by Muhammad in the Hijaz. According to the Qur'an, many Jews and Christians believed that they were not like any other people whom Allah had created, and that their covenant with Allah had given them an elevated status that enabled them to engage in tribal exclusivism and to treat people outside their community,

[1] The shorter suras especially, for example, 83:1-11; 102; 104; 107
[2] 90:5-15
[3] 2:78

especially the weak and vulnerable, with contempt.[1] The Qur'an alleges that they have claimed a privileged position with God simply because of their birthright, rather than having anything to do with social practice or moral behaviour, whereas the Qur'an asserts in response to this that:

"We have ordained a law and assigned a path for each of you. Had God pleased, He would have made of you one nation: but it is His wish to prove you by that which He has bestowed upon you. Vie with each other in good works, for to God you shall all return and He will resolve for you your differences."[2]

It is ignorance that leads the individual to sway from the 'assigned path', regardless of the religion a person belongs to. What is more important, ultimately, is "good works", for "They say: 'Accept the Jewish or Christian faith and you shall be rightly guided.' Say: 'By no means! We believe in the faith of Abraham, the upright one. He was no idolater."[3] Rather, "Abraham was neither a Jew nor Christian. He was an upright man, one who surrendered himself to God"[4]

A further significant saying of the Qur'an is: "Believers, Jews, Christians, and Sabaeans – whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does what is right – shall be rewarded by their Lord; they have nothing to fear or to regret."[5] Here is an explicit support for religious pluralism, which also makes a clear link with salvation. Muslim scholars, as other religious communities were encountered that were unknown during Muhammad's time, extended the spirit of this passage to apply to these religions; giving them, in theory at least, social and religious recognition as well as acceptance of salvation provided they pursued good 'practice'.

The Qur'an, it should be emphasised, considers Muhammad as "one of a galaxy of prophets"[6] who are all bound by '*din*', by 'faith', or 'religion'. "But you are

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[1] 62:6
[2] 5:49
[3] 2:135
[4] 3:67
[5] 2:62
[6] Esack (1997) p.166

only to give warning. Every nation has its mentor."[1] The Qur'an includes the history of many prophets to emphasise the unity of din: these prophets came with identical messages which were preached *within the context of the various and differing situations of their listeners.* "An apostle is sent to every nation. When their apostle comes, justice is done among them; they are not wronged."[2]

Of course, the problem remains as to how adherents of other religions are to *know* that they are doing right or wrong, especially if, as the Qur'an claims, the original message has been distorted. In other words, what is the Muslim responsibility towards other faiths if, on the one hand, there is a call to respect religious diversity whilst, on the other hand, a suggestion that the Qur'an is the 'correct' message? Rahman has quite rightly described the Qur'anic position on this as "somewhat ambiguous"[3] which is hardly helpful. The Qur'an does, for example, urge Muhammad to challenge the beliefs of non-Muslims[4], as well as the task of calling them to submit to Allah[5]. In an effort to break through such an ambiguity, the best that can be proposed is, again, to stress the context of the Qur'anic injunctions, for the Qur'an itself is silent about the *extent* and *nature* of the distortion of other beliefs and; when it does attack specific doctrinal beliefs[6] it is making reference to specific religious groups at a specific time and place.

One other example in the Qur'an is helpful in an understanding of the general attitude towards other beliefs: "Say: 'People of the Book, let us come to an agreement: that we will worship none but God, that we will associate none with Him, and that none of us shall set up mortals as deities besides God."[7] This was uttered after a refusal by a Christian delegation from Najran to enter Islam and submit to Muhammad as prophet. An "agreement" was therefore reached whereby they were only required to "worship none but God". Again, this must be seen in the context of orthodoxy equalling orthopraxis; to worship "none but God"

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[1] 13:08. See also 16:36 and 35:24
[2] 10:47
[3] Rahman (1982c) p.5
[4] 3:70-1; 3:98; 5:68
[5] 7:158
[6] For example, that the afterlife is only for the People of the Book (2:94)
[7] 3:64

(which, incidentally, can be perhaps better translated as to follow the "path of God") and not "set up mortals as deities besides God" is equivalent to following the spirit of the Qur'an in terms of avoiding greed, inequality, avarice and the worship of money:

"For every nation We have ordained a ritual which they observe. Let them not dispute with you concerning this. Call them to the path of your Lord: you are rightly guided. If they argue with you, say: 'God knows best all that you do. On the Day of Resurrection God will judge your differences."[1]

As the above clearly shows, there is no condemnation of differences, rather it is for God to decide Who, after all, gave each nation its own ritual in the first place. The task, ultimately, is to determine what are the essential messages of each teaching of each nation and come to some consensus.

What seems clear is that the Qur'an, and Muhammad, lays emphasis on coexistence as a primary principle. However, coexistence is not to be equated with liberalism and freedom for all, but with the recognition of a definite authority and ideology. Although Islam was not to be considered superior to other religions – for this would go against the Qur'anic condemnation of arrogance and the desire to appropriate God for a specific community – this does not mean that 'anything goes', but that there are definite moral codes. What comes across in the Qur'an is a common struggle against oppression and injustice and a solidarity with the marginalized and exploited. In this sense, we can perceive a religious pluralism. However, the Qur'an also is quick to condemn certain elements of the Other, notably idolaters, but only because of their practice of neglecting the weak and oppressed. *In this context, what hope of an Islamic society that is pluralistic?*

6. The Qur'an and the State.

Granted that the Qur'an, then, adopts a pluralistic approach to religious belief and uphold the rights of the oppressed and weak. However, we must now move on to

[1] 22:67

the 'is-ought' dilemma. Given the Qur'an's moral code, why *should* we impose this upon citizens of a state? What Qur'anic injunction is there that says that a Muslim can only be a true Muslim in an Islamic state? For many Islamists, perhaps most notably Mawlana Mawdudi, the view is adopted that Islam is, first and foremost, a particular sort of polity and society, through which religion is most perfectly expressed in accord with the divine will. Mawdudi, like so many modernists of the previous century, thought that though personal faith was essential, it is ultimately absorbed in the more general political and social dimension of Islam. It is through the Islamic political expression that the world will acknowledge Islam's truth and by which Islam will liberate humanity from the depravity of its secularism and the corruption of its religions.[1]

In contrast with this common view a leading contemporary modernist Muslim thinker is Mohamed Talbi. Born in Tunis in 1921, he was educated there and later in Paris. In his discussions on such subjects as religion and politics, Islam and human rights, women and Islam, religious pluralism, historical analysis and Qur'anic exegesis, Talbi makes clear his dependence upon the Qur'an, while also evincing an easy incorporation of certain Western ideas. In line with the arguments presented in this chapter, Talbi found in the Qur'an and other early sources and historical documents much evidence of Islamic mercy, critical reasoning, freedom and pluralism.

For Talbi, the Qur'an is Islam, and he understands Islam as personal piety and worship of God within an ethical framework. Importantly, the Qur'an, for Talbi, contains both universal ethical principles and more detailed *timebound* injunctions meant by God only for the particular situations of their revelation. Therefore, in his view, "the timeless 'wheat' of revelation must be separated from its timebound 'chaff'".[2] This, for Talbi, is essential if Islam is to avoid fossilisation by applying timebound principles to situations that are no longer appropriate. The whole ethos of Islam, specifically in the Qur'anic ethical universalism, is its timelessness, its ability to be relevant to different times and cultures. Talbi argues that for much of

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[1] Nettler (1996) pp.183-186
[2] Nettler (2000) p.53

Islamic history since the Prophetic period, the development of Islam has been along the wrong path of a rigid application of ancient teachings to inappropriate times and situations on the assumption that it is the application of God's will. This 'conservatism' is as relevant to modern Islamic scholarship as it was to the classical and medieval scholars and, in fact, if anything, they are *more* conservative now (for example, on the issue of women's rights) than they once were.

In Talbi's article '*Religious Liberty: A Muslim Perspective*',[1] he argues for placing the Qur'an within context when we attempt to determine Islamic ethical values. Talbi considers the relationship between Man and God by quoting the Qur'an: "He first created man from clay, then made his offspring from a drop of humble fluid. He moulded him and breathed into him of His spirit."[2] Here Man is seen from two perspectives, from a lower perspective of merely matter (created from clay), but also from the higher perspective of sharing in God's "spirit". Man, then, has the potential to be the greatest creature on earth, represented by Adam as the heavenly prototype for humankind. On the level of the 'spirit' *all* people are really equal, irrespective of their physical and intellectual abilities or religious persuasion. All of mankind has the 'breath' of God in them, the same dignity, the same ability to ascend to God, the same sacredness and entitlement to be vicegerent on earth. Here, Talbi argues, "from a Qur'anic perspective we may say that human rights are rooted in what every human is by nature, and this is by virtue of God's plan and creation. Thus the cornerstone of all human rights is religious liberty."[3]

Although all people have been given the 'breath' of God they must be free to choose their own way, without coercion, and to fulfil their own destiny, quoting the Qur'an once more:

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[1] Talbi (1989)
[2] sura 32, verse 9
[3] Talbi (1989) p.14

"There shall be no compulsion in religion. True guidance is now distinct from error. He that renounces idol-worship and puts his faith in God shall grasp a firm handle that will never break. God hears and knows all."[1]

This verse was used to reprove some Jews and Christians, newly converted to Islam in Medina, who were wished to convert their children to Islam too. Faith, to be true and reliable, must be a voluntary act and is an individual concern. Faith is a gift from God that can be accepted or rejected, for mankind has the capacity to resist the call of God and the mission of the prophet is strictly to advise, warn, convey a message, and to admonish but without compelling: "Therefore give warning. Your duty is only to give warning: you are not their keeper."[2]

Talbi goes on to cite two examples whereby traditional Islamic theology has not, for historical reasons, been in accord with the Qur'an. It is worthwhile summarising his argument here as it demonstrates his understanding of how theology can be in out of accord with the basic tenets of the Qur'an. The two examples are the case of *dhimmis*, and the case of apostates:

1. *Dhimmis*. The *dhimmis* are the name given to minority groups that existed within Islamic states. Even though a number of countries came under Muslim rule as a result of force or *jihad*, the teachings of the Qur'an have been observed to the extent that Islam was never imposed by compulsion. With two or three exceptions, *dhimmis* have been allowed to pursue the religion of their choice and, in many cases, their situation was improved under Islamic rule, enjoying lengthy periods of tolerance and prosperity, as well as holding high positions in administrations, courts and economic activities. However, they did suffer discrimination from time to time, notably after the reign of al-Mutawakkil (847-861), with oppression culminating especially during the reign of al-Hakim (966-1021) who, quite possibly, was insane. Discrimination and open oppression was always prompted, or strongly backed, by the theologians. However, Talbi

[1] 2:256
[2] 8:21-22

emphasises that the Qur'an is explicit in teaching us to respect the dignity and freedom of one another.

2. Apostates. According to traditional theology, though conversion to Islam must be without coercion, once inside Islam it is practically impossible to get out of it again. Conversion from Islam to another religion is considered treason, and the apostate could face the death penalty. Talbi notes that traditional theologians rely on the precedent set by the first rightly-guided caliph, Abu Bakr, for their interpretation. The apostasy wars involved the caliph fighting against the tribes that rejected his authority and refused to pay the alms taxes. The caliph likened this rebellion to apostasy. Further, the theologians cite the authority of the *hadith*, "Anyone who changes religion must be put to death."[1] This *hadith*, Talbi points out, is usually mixed in the books of *hadith* with rebellion and highway robbery. The cases of 'apostates' killed during the Prophet's life or shortly after his death are without exception those people who turned their weapons against the Muslims. Therefore, the death penalty is more as a consequence of a threat against a fragile community, as well as attacking the values inculcated in the Qur'an of equality and freedom. Talbi also believes that in the case of this *hadith*, "we have many good reasons to consider it a forgery."[2] In the Qur'an there is no mention of the death penalty required against the apostate; punishment is to be left to God's judgement in the afterlife.

We need not go into Talbi's analysis of Qur'anic exegesis here, as it would result in repeating much of what has already been said. The main point is that Talbi's contribution lies in accompanying such conservative development in Islamic thought and practice with the conception and attempted implementation of an ideal Islamic state. Such attempts, however, were implemented according to timebound ideals which, Talbi argues, are ill-conceived and that religion should, in fact, be divorced from politics. For Talbi, there is no Islamic concept of the

[1] Talbi (1989) p. 16
[2] *ibid.*

state and, even if there was, it should not be followed anyway as it would most likely turn out to be irrelevant to the modern world. Any attempt to interpret the Qur'an as being a 'constitution' would lead to a state that was tyrannical simply because of the strict adherence to Qur'anic injunctions that are no longer applicable to modern times.

However, even if it is the case that the Qur'an should not be seen as a political document, this still leaves the issues of what values the Muslim should adhere to, which in itself has inevitable political consequences. Talbi cites such ethical principles as freedom, human rights and pluralism as values that are in the spirit of the Qur'an, taken from a hermeneutic perspective. If such values are to be promoted, then, in our modern world, these can be best expressed through democracy. Talbi does not argue for democracy specifically as a Qur'anic injunction, but on the premise that this is the best current political system if we are to adhere to Qur'anic and, therefore, Islamic values. This may lead one to conclude that, for example, a theocracy is perfectly acceptable in Islam *provided* it adheres to Qur'anic values. Likewise, although democracy may well be the best political system at the present time, this does not mean that it will not be superseded by an even better political system in the future.

Talbi is well aware of the argument amongst many Islamists who argue that there are Islamic precedents in support of democracy which at the very least suggest that this system is also 'Islamic'. Here, scholars refer to the ancient Arabian (and Qur'anic) institution of *shura* ('consultation') by rulers with their subjects as examples of justifying (if not enjoining) democracy in the Islamic world. However, Talbi rejects the association between *shura* and democracy. Again, Talbi asks us to contextualise the concept of *shura*, arguing that as this concept comes from a particular time and place when the conception of democracy as we know it today did not exist, *shura* has no application to modern society. Neither Islam, nor Western civilisation as a whole, had a conception of democracy as understood in the modern era; certainly not the modern conception of democracy which Talbi understands to mean 'the voice of the many' who determine who rules and how they rule. *Shura* may well contain some elements of 'true

democracy', in particular the concern for the individual and his or her views, however this is far from arguing that it was a functional political institution. Muslims who would today attempt to implement democracy in their countries are, or should be, doing so because they wish to see a society based on universal Islamic values (which, Talbi believes, are also universal *human* values) rather than arguing that the Qur'an dictates such a system, or that there are historical precedents.

Talbi is by no means a lone voice in his call for a contextualisation of Islam and the use of hermeneutics. His ideas correspond to that of a number of renowned contemporary modernists, yet it is still a relatively new approach[1]. The task is still at hand to distinguish common features, pre-modern as well as modern, on modernist thought which would then provide a foundation for more detailed identification of the trend. In this respect, reference can be made to an interesting article by the American social anthropologist of Islam Dale F. Eickleman. In '*Inside the Islamic Reformation*'[2], Eickleman – as the title of the article suggests – makes the far-reaching assertion that Islam is at the point of undergoing an 'Islamic Reformation' embodied in this modernism and having the same impact and function as the Protestant Reformation in Europe.

Eickleman argues that, largely through mass media and mass education, in the context of modernisation and Westernisation, have engendered an emerging individualism which has resulted in the emergence of believers who are far more critical of official and traditional interpretations of belief and practice. Although this has led to a degree of 'fanaticism', it has also resulted in the kind of modernism I have considered in this chapter. Eickleman cites the contemporary Syrian civil engineer Muhammad Shahrur whose book, *The Book and the Qur'an: A Contemporary Interpretation* (1990), has sold many thousands of copies despite an official ban in much of the Middle East. Shahrur adopts an historical-critical

[1] A reminder to the reader once more that I am not arguing that this is the 'right' approach but, in the Nietzschean perspective sense, the approach that is in line with our modern understanding of the world. Islam, then, has two choices: either to argue that it can be flexible, or that it is a set ideology that will inevitably stagnate.
[2] Eickleman (1998)

approach, along the same lines as Talbi and, indeed, this thesis, by asking Muslims to interpret the Qur'an in terms of their own lives and the time and place they live in. Though strongly apolitical, again like Talbi, Shahrur tends towards democracy as his political form for the same reasons. Eickleman refers to other scholars in the same vein to demonstrate his view that there is an underlying transformation taking place amongst believers – and not only amongst Islamic scholars – that is so significant, that, "We will look back on the latter years of the twentieth century as a time of change as profound for the Muslim world as the Protestant Reformation was for Christendom."[1] Eickleman sees this reformation as the depoliticisation of Islam, and as being unavoidable provided the mass media is allowed to thrive, for this militates against any prescribed form of Islamic political order and promotes the conception of a more personal, pietistic Islam that develops best in a non-Islamic democratic society.

Eickleman's contribution to the debate does highlight the fact that there is no 'one Islam', certainly not a monolithic political Islam, and it helps to put into context much of the contemporary debate on the nature of Islamic identity, particularly the questioning of the Transhistorical, orthodox, traditional and curiously rarely-questioned view that there is no separation between the religious and secular in Islam. Having said that, the need for Islam to find its own 'collective consciousness', its own 'soul', may be hindered by making comparisons with the European Protestant Reformation, rather than helping. Although there may be certain common features, notably the call for a more personal interpretation of the holy scripture and the resultant emphasis on individualism, the specific situation that gave rise to the Protestant Reformation is very different from that faced by the modern world, especially in the emergence of secularism and the dominance of Western culture. Given that the influence of mass media and education on the Islamic world is a fact, this is not the same as saying that Islam should give up its 'soul' and become nothing more than an incongruous and empty shell.

If the term '*islam*' is to be seen as a flexible, changing entity, as a motivator for the Qur'anic concept of social justice, then it has a vital role to play in modern

[1] Eickleman (1998) p. 86

society. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche sees moral values as important in the sense that they can promote the survival and posterity of the species, depending, of course, on which moral values are adopted. His 'shattering of idols' does not, or should not, result in nihilism, in the destruction of all moral values and social order. Rather, Nietzsche is in many respects a 'conservative' who upholds order and moral codes. The Qur'an echoes this, for it certainly is a guide for mankind, providing a clear set of values that act as an imperative. We *ought* to be moral, we *ought* to be honest, kind and treat others with due respect, we *ought* to be pluralistic and accepting of other people's beliefs. Like *Beyond Good and Evil*, the Qur'an does not merely present us with how things *are* but also how things *should* be.

Chapter Five

The Soul as Deriving from *Jahiliyya*

"That individual philosophical concepts are not something arbitrary, something growing up autonomously, but on the contrary grow up connected and related to one another; that, however suddenly and arbitrarily they appear to emerge in the history of thought, they none the less belong just as much to a system as do the members of the fauna of a continent: that fact is in the end also shown in the fact that the most diverse philosophers unfailingly fill out again and again a certain basic scheme of *possible* philosophies...Their thinking is in fact not so much a discovering as a recognising, a remembering, a return and home-coming to a far-off, primordial total household of the soul out of which these concepts once emerged – philosophising is to that extent a species of atavism of the first rank."

- Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* [1]

1. *Jahiliyya* and the Bedouin Ethos

History does not exist without a theoretical perspective that allows it to be recognised as being edifying. The important point is not whether the history presented here is 'true' or 'not', whether it is subject to scientific and methodical verification or not, whether it is 'myth' or 'fact'. Rather, history here is to be seen as containing a series of 'moments', whether mythical or actual, that have an impact upon the Muslim psyche – the Nietzschean soul – that directly affect the social, moral and political Islam of today. The philosophy of history has thrown forward a number of competing and conflicting ideas on the relationship between history and the present. For Hans-Georg Gadamer, the present and the past were able to function as a partnership in a process of negotiation that leads to a relocation of both from the paradigmatic confinements of their 'moments'. However, Martin Heidegger held that the present can be of interest only to the

[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 20, p.20

degree that it can act as a tool to measure the distance that has been crossed away from the past. In this sense, the interest in history is motivated by the desire to settle contemporary accounts, rather than a concern for an essential truth. For Georg Lukacs, a concern with history is evidence that the contemporary world has ceased to appear meaningful. History becomes a battleground of ideas; a collection of raw materials that are regrouped and reorganised to present a story that acts as a weapon for interpreting the present.

In much of this work, history is to be viewed in the same way as Gadamer. Here, moments in history are revisited in order to find causal connections between those moments and the events and ideologies of Islam in our contemporary world. Further, the concern with moments in history is not, as already stated, a concern as to whether or not they are subject to verification and, even if they were, whether they have been shown to be 'true' or 'false' but, rather, the phenomenological imprints that they leave. The extent to which these moments in history were deliberate acts, that is, intentional acts, to make their mark on the future is one question that is less easy to answer. Events have a habit of taking on a momentum of their own which causes one to hesitate before declaring any kind of intentionality at work. The birth of Islam, as it will be shown, was not a birth of a fully-formed self-aware adult, but a weak and struggling baby that was brought up within an already established set of cultural, moral and political norms. The extent to which that 'baby' came to assert its own identity suggests, on the one hand, a degree of 'free will' (and all the philosophical problems that raises) and, on the other hand, the intentionality of this self-assertion. One ignores the influence of surrounding forces at one's peril here. However, again, we must be cautious not to confuse the actuality of the assertion of Islam as a pure and uncorrupted force and the historical accuracy of such a view. Ultimately, what is important is the view of the Islamic paradigm in the soul of the Muslim. However, having said that, a clear understanding of the cultural context of the beginnings of Islam should help us to understand the relative importance of it for contemporary discourse.

In this chapter, the study will examine in greater detail the nature of authority that existed in the Arabic world prior to the coming of Muhammad. It should be stressed that no study of Islamic authority is complete without reference to the period known as *Jahiliyya* (and, more specifically, the geographical area of Arabia), as this would be to ignore the crucial influence of the environment upon what became known as Islam. As an historical-critical approach is being adopted in this study, it must be added that it is asserted that environment does actually have an influence upon the development of Islam as a belief system.

The term '*Jahiliyya*' usually, although not exclusively, refers to the time prior to the advent of Muhammad. Geographically, it is a specific reference to Arabia and, more specifically, to the people of that region, perceived at that time as 'ignorant': 'Ignorance', therefore, of the, message of Islam, but also often implying an inherent barbarity of the people resulting from such ignorance. Without Islam there is no unity, without Islam there is no coherent belief, without Islam there is illiteracy, and so on. Although a specific reference to pre-Muhammad Arabia, it was extended by such reformists as Sayyid Qutb who said: "If we look at the sources and foundations of modern modes of living, it becomes clear that the whole world is steeped in *Jahiliyya*, and all the marvellous material comforts and advanced inventions do not diminish its ignorance". [1] Here, therefore, *Jahiliyya* is a reference to the modern world in general that has turned its back on the message of God by engaging in such things as the pursuance of excessive wealth, and the exploitation of the weak. The term is used in the Qur'an to refer to a psychological state:

"And while bigotry – the bigotry of ignorance – was holding its reign in the hearts of the unbelievers, God sent down His tranquillity on His apostle and on the faithful and made the word of piety binding on them, for they were most worthy and deserving of it." [2]

Thus, the concept of 'tranquillity' can be interpreted as bringing forth a change in mental make-up; from an age of turbulence and chaos to one of spiritual, religious

[1] Qutb (1990) p. 8
[2] 48:26

and moral identity. However, the suggestion – so often evident in texts – that the period before Muhammad was in any way 'barbaric' and chaotic seems both simplistic and untenable. As history is being re-written, evidence points to a much more complex society than originally supposed. Furthermore, Arabic society would hardly function if it did not have a degree of complexity and a structure of authority within its system. To suppose, also, that Islam, with its central concept of the *umma* and the paradigm of Muhammad and Medina as its guiding force, simply replaced wholesale the existing structure is also very hard to swallow, and would not be suggested by any modern, serious scholar.

Although, over a period of time (the length of which is very debatable), the Islamic *Weltanschauung* did transform Arabic authority, obvious continuities also exist with the past. While Islam as a world religion is moulded by the authority of the Golden Age Narrative, this in itself is directly related to the *cultural template* of pre-Muhammad, Arabic society. This 'cultural template', in turn, is what can be correlated with the Nietzschean concept of the soul as a matter of *physio-psychology*. Islam is, in its essence, an *Arabic* religion and its formative years were centred in Arabia and, more broadly, the Middle East. Bearing this in mind, Islam in, for example, Indonesia is also subject to the authority of the 'cultural template' of Arabia.

Also note that the term 'Arab' was originally used by the Bedouin to refer to themselves (and, in fact, is still used by them in this way); it only later became a designation for the whole Arab-speaking world. It is interesting to consider why the term became much more widely-used. It is reasonable to suggest that the term 'Arab' could hardly be considered in a negative sense if it was so readily appropriated by Arab nationalists in the last century. Rather, it was associated with positive qualities such as pride and self-esteem; which is in sharp contrast to, say, the Greek and Roman attitude to 'barbarians'. Therefore, the ethos of the Bedouin has a much higher regard amongst the Arabs and, by extension, Muslims,

than is often supposed. To speak of the 'Bedouin ethos' is to speak, at least in part, of the 'Muslim ethos'.[1] As Lindholm notes:

"Bedouin values are important in the Middle East because of the disproportionate part they played in Middle Eastern and Muslim history...it was in great measure through the aid of the Bedouin that Muhammad came to power in his own society."

2. The Contribution of Ibn Khaldun

To understand how authority was perceived in the Bedouin context, the Muslim philosopher Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) is important here. He says of the Bedouin: "The leader is obeyed, but he has no power to force others to accept his rulings...There is scarcely one among them who would cede his power to another, even to his father, his brother, or the eldest member of his family."[2] Born in Tunis, Khaldun served as tutor to the heir apparent of the Muslim state of Grenada. After defeat in battle, which he led, he was forced to spend three years as a refugee among mountain tribesman. He finished his life as a well-respected Grand Qadi of the Malikite School of law in Cairo. His time among tribesmen, his experience in royal courts, and his background in Greek philosophy, adds up to an insightful view of Arabic authority.

What is so radical – for its time – about Ibn Khaldun's work is his application of philosophical science to the study of history. At his time, much greater emphasis by philosophers was placed on the metaphysical; the world as it is regarded as largely irrelevant. Khaldun believed scientific method could be applied to historical processes as a way of understanding how communities order their lives. Through this process, he hoped to build a framework for understanding the rise and fall of dynasties in the Middle East. In his *Muqaddimah* he starts with the sensible premise that "the differences of condition among people are the result of

[1] Lindholm (1996) p. 22
[2] Khaldun (1967) p.108, 119

the different ways in which they make their living."[1] He then goes on to contrast two ways of "making a living" in Arabic society: that of the Bedouin and the city-dweller. *Not*, it should be emphasised, the traditional distinction between the nomad and the pastoralist (in the sense of shepherd or farmer) because, as Ibn Khaldun rightly points out, many Bedouin were also farmers.

The more significant distinction is that the Bedouin exists in a markedly crude and instinctive world compared with the relative luxury and decadence of the city. Due to the relatively impoverished environment of the Bedouin, the accumulation of wealth and power is, at best, a very temporary condition and can just as easily be lost. Therefore, what distinctions exist between one individual and another rest largely upon personal characteristics; respect generated by merit. As a result there is a much greater degree of egalitarianism amongst the Bedouin coupled with a strong sense of individualism and independence. However, the city life, built on the development of commerce and a sedentary existence, results in the need for greater co-operation and division of labour: the need is greater to have a hierarchical system for a people who are still largely aggressive and individualist. This distinction needs to be considered in more detail a little later in this chapter. However, for now, it is important to recognise that such a difference in how social systems function could have an important impact upon the essence of Islamic authority. This view of Bedouin society as largely egalitarian and cohesive would have a political impact in that it would not require or, for that matter, allow for the hierarchical system of authority or for the need of a leader that was both religious and political. However, it must also be remembered that Islam has its origins in an urban setting. Therefore, there is possibility of tension between the social structure of the Bedouin and that of the city-dweller.

Like Rousseau, Ibn Khaldun traces the Bedouin fall from purity and egalitarianism to the exposure of the city. However, Rousseau regarded this deterioration as an irreversible process whereas, for Ibn Khaldun, the Bedouin and city-dweller exist simultaneously although, inevitably, many are drawn to the comforts of the city and succumb to the authority of royal rule, losing their sense

[1] Khaldun (1967) p. 91

of individuality. A cycle occurs; the new migrants to the cities soften over time and are subsequently invaded by the aggressive neighbouring tribes, and so on. The only way this cycle can be broken is through an ethically compelling system of religion which, of course, can also be forgotten in time unless there is also a cycle of prophecy.

An important element in the Golden Age Narrative is the concept of the state – *dawla* in Arabic. Until modern times, the term *dawla* denoted a particular kind of patrimony, the ownership of command and authority within a specific line. The term was used by Ibn Khaldun to refer to government (or the regime in power); not a territorial structure as such. Thus, we have the *dawla* of the Abbasids, and the *dawla* of Harun al-Rashid. This abstract *dawla* is constituted of a body politic in the sense of having a ruler, troops and bureaucrats. What may be termed 'civil society' as we understand the term today is absent from this construct. Power is exclusive to the sovereign and the 'citizens' are merely a body that acts upon the will of the sovereign; they have no political status as such; apart from, perhaps, token references within Islamic law.

Not unlike Medieval Europe, therefore, the sovereign was associated in terms of power with that of the divine, the 'state' in this sense being little more than the incarnation of the power to command and coerce. In this construct, the *ulama* assumes a subsidiary position; dealing essentially with worship and personal or family law. This form of authority is what Ibn Khaldun calls '*mulk*' (a linguistic derivation of *malik* – king - and *mulk* – possession); a style of rule based primarily on power and coercion. In Islamic history it is the *al-wazi al-sultani*: the 'sultanic deterrent'. The sultan is the sole political subject, whose action upon society is univocal.

The sultanic construct seems dominant in culturally, ethnically diverse societies. In fact, there seems to be a pattern to the Sunni control of governments in ethnically diverse Arab countries. Whereas the Sunni Arabs control the bureaucracy and public services; other ethnicities control the military or security forces. For example, in Morocco, the Arab Sunni dominate the bureaucracy and

public services, whereas the Berbers control the military and security forces.[1] Also, in North Yemen, the Shawafi Sunni dominate the bureaucracy, the Shi'a Zaidis the military.[2]

Why this situation should exist can be inferred from the writings of, notably, Deffontaines (1948) and Fischer (1956), who conclude that Islam is essentially an urban faith. It is the product of the city; hence the assignation of Medina as an 'Islamic state' although, in actual fact, it is really a city and, compared with contemporary cities, a small one at that. Nonetheless, the point is valid. Sunni Islam has always been centralised in cities, whether it be Medina, Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Fez, Haifa, and so on. Bureaucratic control has always rested in the cities, whereas rural communities maintain tribal links and, as it happens, military arms:

"The Bedouins...are alone in the country and remote from militias. They have no walls or gates...they provide their own defence and do not entrust it to...others...They always carry weapons...Fortitude has become a character of them, and courage their nature..."[3]

In such a circumstance the city-based ruler must "rule them [the rural dweller] kindly and avoid antagonising them."[4] The rural dwellers have their own form of control; what Ibn Khaldun referred to as '*asabiyah*' (derived from '*asab*', meaning nerve). In the arid zones, where rainfall is sparse, pastoralism must remain the predominant form of agriculture. Pastoralists, unlike peasants, are usually organised along tribal lines and are relatively independent of central government. They cannot be taxed or brought under the control of feudal lords who will appropriate a part of their produce. *Asabiyah* signifies internal cohesion, often brought about by unity of blood or faith. In a *state* setting, unity is brought about by the use of force. In an *asabiyah* setting, however, unity arises voluntarily through the sharing of moral bonds: blood, descent, marriage, ethnic origin, tribal affinity, faith or a mix of all or some of these features. According to

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[1] Gellner and Micaud (1973)
[2] Khuri (1990), p.51
[3] Gellner (1979)
[4] *ibid.*

Ibn Khaldun, the *asabiyah* structure reaches its zenith when it blends with religion, leading to conquest (as happened with the emergence of Islam). Also, a group is at the '*asabiyah* stage' when the internal mechanisms of control are strong. When they weaken, the group reaches the *mulk* stage, the nadir of power, and the beginning of eventual decline; the boundaries between kinship groups weakens, their moral framework is diluted, and the groups merge with more dominant forces. In the cities – which lacked a nomadic lifestyle, austerity, and equality, and instead possessed luxury, social stratification, and used force and coercion – *asabiyah* was weak, though statehood was strong. Therefore, the rise of statehood leads to the decline of *asabiyah*.

An example that may well be classed as belonging to the Transhistorical is the Khaldunian 'Caliphate model'; a state based on the application of religion and divine *sharia*. In this construct, the *ulama* – in consultation (*shura*) – controls government: the 'politics of sharia' (*siyasa sharia*): a society based on "*Shar*, the Islamic *nomos*, the *dharma* of the Muslims"[1]. Power, in this case, is re-routed into primarily legal discourse: a discourse that is regarded as divine in origin. That is, it emanates mainly from the commands of the Qur'an and *hadith* of the Prophet. This utopic vision of the state, therefore, derives from the Golden Age Narrative in its mythical form. Power, in this case, is not so much diluted as 're-directed'. In theory at least, power rests with the Golden Age Narrative and not with a living individual.[2] However, this, it must be emphasised, is a *utopic* vision. It may well help to explain how it impinges upon the Muslim collective memory, but it may also result in causing Islam to become stagnant by pursuing an unobtainable vision.

In terms of Sunni Islam, the head of state no longer had religious authority. However, in principle at least, the positive utopian vision – and historical reality - of the Imam as both spiritual and political head remained with the non-Sunni

[1] Al-Azmeh (1996), p. 129

[2] However, in practice – as in Gellner's 'Platonism Mark 2' society - the final 'Transhistorical Truth' of revelation in fact strengthens the power of those who are literate and interpreters of the Divine Word. Indeed, the 'Platonism Mark 3' society leads to an elite class of soldiers and administrators.

Muslims. It is interesting that Shi'a Islam prefers the title that was given to Uthman, thus making direct reference to the view of sacred history as now belonging to the caliphate; although they preferred the title of 'imam' to that of 'caliph'. This choice of title is not accidental: the imam sets forth the 'perfect' religious model to be followed, interpreted and imitated by the community of the faithful. According to Shi'a, Druze and Alawi doctrines, the imam is a visible illustration of that which perfects or completes religion; the only way to salvation. Among the Ibadis and Zaidis, the imam sets the standard for a free and sovereign society. As a model, an *exempla,* the imam is to be followed and imitated. By contrast, however, the caliph is a successor who – in theory at least – is perceived historically as ruling in accordance with already formulated governance. He is the executor of already-ordained law. Interestingly, Ibn Khaldun calls the leader 'imam' when only one person leads the community, and 'emir' or 'sultan' if there are more than one. According to Ibn Khaldun, the imam must be man of deep religious knowledge, physically fit and capable of establishing justice. More importantly, he must also be an object of consensus and therefore cannot be ousted from office. Whereas, Ibn Khaldun legitimises rebellion against a sultan or an emir, he forbids it against the imam.

In this sense, consensus becomes almost indistinguishable from *asabiyah.* This is why Ibn Khaldun sees the imamate as a kind of leadership that combines both the *asabiyah* form of power (consensus) and the caliphate-like authority, where religious knowledge prevails. Ibn Khaldun's theory of *asabiyah* applied to the North African milieu, which he understood best. However, it can be modified to suit the conditions of the more sophisticated societies of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, where the pattern was institutionalised. However, for Ibn Khaldun, it was *abstract power*, not society, which is the primary substance of his discourse.[1]

"*Siyasa* denotes absolutist management, the direction by reason of unreason. It is used in relation to animal husbandry. It is the management of natural disorder by the order of culture, and regal power is the ultimate state of culture in a natural world of men marked by a *bellum omnium contra omnes* which necessitates the establishment of power."[2]

[1] Al-Azmeh (1982) pp. 51,52
[2] Al-Azmeh (1996) p.130

Siyasa, therefore, is not the field where power is contested and arrived at: *siyasa* presupposes the power of which it is a *modus operandi*. Though not unique to Islam, the pattern of politics that existed in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire was the *asabiyah* model. In Egypt the Mamluks, who ruled from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries, maintained themselves against the disintegration of *asabiyah* by constantly replenishing their stock with new warriors, bought as young boys from Central Asia, whom they trained in their own households. The Ottomans maintained a form of 'artificial *asabiyah*' by recruiting from the Christian Balkan provinces janissaries, whom they trained for war and administration.[1]

In Sunni Islam, the Golden Age Narrative – the image of Islam as pristine – would be a rallying point around which tribal forces would unify and invade the cities. When the tribes decide to unite, their superior cohesion, mobility and fighting skills put the city – the seat of government – at their mercy. In the cities, the *ulama* – guardians of the legal and scholarly traditions – would attempt to defend the orthodoxy by exercising the paradigm of the Golden Age Narrative. This *exempla* acts as mediator between the conflict of city and countryside; converting the pastoralists to the guardians of the orthodox tradition. In Gellner's metaphor, the wolves become sheepdogs.[2]

This Khaldunian pattern can be perceived in most of the central Islamic lands, from Morocco to Chinese Turkestan, until the present century. What has changed is that improved communications has allowed greater control over marginal regions. Even today, however, kinship remains the main form of social solidarity in the absence of corporate institutions. In the Middle East, for example, tribal and family *asabiyah* have kept their importance as political factors despite modern technology. In fact, technology can be utilised to reinforce *asabiyah* values.[3] *Asabiyah* represents the political reality, and it is understandable that such sayings as the following are credited to the Prophet: "He is not one of us who proclaims the cause of *asabiyah*; and he is not one of us who fights in the cause of *asabiyah*;

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[1] Goodwin (1999)
[2] Gellner (1979)
[3] Ruthven (1991) p.100

and he is not one of us who dies in the cause of *asabiyah*."[1] Therefore, despite the qualities that *asabiyah* possesses in terms of social cohesion; it might also be seen as a threat to orthodox Islam in favour of more 'extremist' elements. Islam is geared more to breaking down *asabiyah,* to be replaced by the 'super-tribe'; the *umma.* Just as Islam was aimed at eroding the old tribalism that had caused so much conflict, it also encouraged the pastoralists in to settling in the cities. It must be remembered that Islam was an urban religion, but that it was generally conceived within a pastoral milieu. Thus, the Golden Age Narrative centres itself within the city – that of Medina – and is, therefore, supreme over that of countryside and its inherent values. At the same time, should the city deviate from the 'straight path' and cease to be perceived as 'Islamic', then its renewal and reform – *tajdid* and *islah* – is sanctioned and has its roots within *asabiyah.* This follows according to the Golden Age Narrative: the decline in the values of Mecca and the subsequent warning by Muhammad, to be followed by its spiritual renewal from 'outside'. Although Medina, of course, is the Islamic city *par excellence*, it was – at the time of the *hijra* – little more than a collection of disparate tribes who, therefore, possessed the qualities of *asabiyah,* even if they were unable to exercise it until the Constitution of Medina (see Chapter Six) was fully established and formally adhered to.

Consequently, Sunni Islam can be perceived as conservative and creating its own myth: that of a negative utopic vision of the Medinan state that is now unobtainable. Khaldunian *asabiyah* is alive and well but is perceived by Sunni Islam as a threat to Sunni ascendancy. When one refers to the 'true and pristine Islam', it is a fiction to look towards the Golden Age Narrative. Rather one should refer to, for example, leadership amongst Ismailis or Shi'ites. Maintaining the Golden Age myth is a way of institutionalising Islam and keeping it 'safe'; *whereas Islam, in its essence, is rebellious, revolutionary, and concerned with reform and renewal.* By focussing reform on an unrealistic ideal, Sunni Islam prevents renewal from actually being realised. Further, by increasing the status of Muhammad from a prophet with a small 'p' to that of a large 'P' it is also causing a parallel decrease in the status of the caliph. *In Nietzschean terms, we have*

[1] Quoted in Asad (1980) p.32. as a hadith by Abu Dawud

created idols from our will to truth, yet the essence of Islam is, in fact, to shatter these idols.

It is not, unfortunately, within the realms of this thesis to consider authority within Shi'a Islam. Very broadly speaking (and this is *very* broad, as the different forms of Shi'a are extremely complex and diverse) Shi'a Islam, centred within the office of the imam, struggles to put the Utopic Vision of religion and state as indelibly linked into practice far more diligently than Sunni Islam has ever done. Yet, according to Ibn Khaldun's theory, Sunni Islam finds it to its advantage to present the Utopic Vision as an archetype as a way of protecting itself against the calls for change and renewal. *Shi'a Islam believes that the Platonic Ideal State is achievable, whereas Sunni Islam uses the Platonic State as a model, knowing full well it can never be achieved.*

The words of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* once again spring to mind here. According to Nietzsche, although Plato did also face the question of the value of truth, he concluded that truth is too dangerous to make it public and that the truth seeker should lie willingly and knowingly. For Nietzsche there is a clear distinction between what Plato thought and what he desired for others to believe, and it is this which was called 'Platonism'.[1] In the same way, what Sunni Islam thought and what it wants others to believe likewise differ, *and for the same reasons.* For to admit that the Utopic Vision is unobtainable is to put its very survival in jeopardy. Although Nietzsche was referring specifically to Platonism, Christianity (his 'Platonism for the masses'), and Kant's *noumena*, parallels can be made with Sunni Islam as a historical phenomenon. For example, Nietzsche argues that Christianity uses its moral power (its will to power) to ensure its survival: anyone who attempts to assert his or her own will to power by questioning this morality is declared immoral and, as a result, that individual feels a sense of guilt and sin. By imposing 'the Good' as an ideal and as the truth, society is able to dispel any attempts at questioning the laws, traditions and morals of that society. However, Nietzsche sees this as ultimately disastrous because in time that society will stagnate unless it allows for fresh blood. The state may

[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 1, p. 5

'survive' in a static atrophic form but it will not prosper or progress. In Khaldunian terms, the Islamic state must allow for *asabiyah* to assert itself from time to time, yet Sunni Islam in the modern world has often attempted to undermine this force.

Nietzsche wonders at the human capacity for simplification and falsification, not so much as a criticism for he accepts that this is a reflection of the love of life; misguided though it is! In this respect, then, philosophy can come across as 'anti-life' because it jeopardises this 'holy simplicity' that the love of life generates. Nietzsche often talks of the risk the philosopher takes in seeking knowledge when humanity has a natural 'will to ignorance'. Not unlike Plato, Nietzsche sees ignorance as an important aspect of the human condition.[1]

It is hardly surprising that Mecca, with its *mulk* mentality, should declare Muhammad a 'criminal', for he represents that which questions the status quo. Muhammad also represents a form of *asabiyah*; as someone who brought in what was best of the Bedouin ethos. However, this ethos would be short-lasting as the *mulk* mentality reasserted itself soon after the death of Muhammad and the return to power of the Quraysh. However, the point remains a strong one: *Islam in its essence is a religion of renewal and reform; it is <u>not</u> accepting of the status quo if this proves to be life-denouncing.*

3. The Modern Contribution

Important though Ibn Khaldun is, his view of the Bedouin ethos requires more modern research if it is to be more than just a theory. Can it be shown that the Bedouin ethos is essentially independent and egalitarian? If this is the case, then it adds greater support to the thesis that Islam inherited these essential qualities and would point towards a religion that does not rule 'from above' or intends to be all-encompassing. A number of scholars, notably William Irons, have pointed out that the lack of large-scale economic production or distribution methods,

[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 24, p.24

together with a low population density and the high mobility of the camel nomad, makes the development of any kind of institutionalised hierarchy unlikely: "...hierarchical political institutions are generated only by external political relations with state societies, and never develop purely as a result of the internal dynamics of such societies."[1] The image of the independent, noble nomad warrior should not be seen as merely a romantic, Orientalist notion. Accepting the perfectly credible thesis that values are, at least in some measure, the product of one's environment, it is not difficult to extrapolate conditions in sixth century Arabia by considering Bedouin cultures of today in similar environments. Donald Cole's study of the al-Murrah Bedouin, for example, present an image of highly mobile, independent tribes people who are resistant to hierarchy and stratification.[2] Having said that, it must also be remembered that tribal existence is frequently poor, simple and violent; yet this is the culture from which Islam developed. Further, the tribes were the 'wolves' (using Gellner's term) compared with sheep-like existence in the city, and thus the tribes served as 'sheepdogs' to Mecca and Medina.[3]

There are, of course, other non-urban types of people to be found in the Middle East. Charles Lindholm has outlined three such groupings: the already referred to camel nomad, the shepherd, and the mountain farmer. The shepherds, for example, differ from the camel nomad in that they are more structured and orderly[4]; they *have* to be as it requires the movement of extremely large herds at specific times, in specific places, and often through unfriendly territory. As a result of this, "a prerequisite for the development of a land use pattern such as this is a political form that ensures the disciplined and co-ordinated migration of large populations by regular routes and schedules. This requires the development of strong and effective co-ordinating authorities."[5] These, 'co-ordinating authorities', however, are not 'kingly' in character, but act more as arbitrators in disputes with confederations of tribes. Tribes gather together in a loose

[1] Irons (1979) p.362
[2] Cole (1975)
[3] Gellner (1979)
[4] Present-day groups include the Berber tribes of the Atlas, the Lurs, Qashqai of Iran, Kurdish and Arab pastoralists, etc.
[5] Barth (1959) p.9

confederation under a central leadership that is often recruited from outside the tribal structure. Such a classic example of this system, as we shall see, is the appointment of Muhammad as arbitrator for the tribes of Medina.

As Lindholm notes, "Like their camel-herding cousins, they still claimed to be all equals, in spite of the existence of objective hierarchies."[1] Lindholm points out that this state of affairs has caused some consternation among Marxist anthropologists, who prefer to refer to it as a "political chimera"[2]. However, the structure of master-subject relationship does not usually appear to follow a Marxist model. Work that the Marxist might regard as 'oppression' could be perceived by the subject as an honourable position, bearing in mind the attitude that the rich of today could be the poor of tomorrow, as so often happens in such an unstable environment. From this point of view, the wealthy man is simply someone who, up to now, has succeeded in a path that the subject himself wishes to follow. Lois Beck has observed that even amongst the most hierarchical pastoral confederacy, the Qashqai of Iran, "tribespeople often viewed tribal leaders as necessary (although sometimes unwelcome) mediators against what they perceived as the illegitimate, exploitative rule of the state."[3]

Authority, then, is perceived as a contractual arrangement between equals; one by which a party to the agreement might well sever ties if such authority becomes oppressive or ceases to be in their interest. Note the abandonment of many tribes from the *umma* after the death of Muhammad. Here is an example, so typically Middle Eastern in character, of a community kept together by the capacity of the leader to mobilise men into a workable unit. Authority was respected, but not deified and nor, as a rule, was the leader able to exploit or interfere in the general day-to-day affairs of the individual tribes.

[1] Lindholm (1996) p.24.
[2] Black (1972) p.617
[3] Beck (1990) p. 216

Finally, mention should be made of the third group referred to by Lindholm: the independent mountain farmers.[1] These differ from the other two groupings in that they are not nomadic. However, although they are settled, they produce considerable surplus, and are densely populated by comparison with the other two groups. They also possess the qualities of egalitarianism and antipathy towards state authority. The best reason for this seems to lie with a type of egalitarian competitive social ethic where there is a struggle for scarce resources.[2] Whatever the reason, the picture presented of the Arab world outside of the city is of a people who "unanimously maintain ideologies of egalitarianism and personal independence."[3]

The image so far portrayed, therefore, is a system of authority that, not surprisingly, is a product of its environment: an environment of 'shifting sands' whereby population is mobile and structures, such as they are, fragile. In such a circumstance, hierarchy is difficult to maintain and the populace hard to exploit. What authority is established maintains legitimacy by mutual contract and respect rather than through deification or force. It is hoped that this portrayal gives some idea as to the position of Muhammad, the archetypal Islamic leader, and his relation to the 'citizens': a tenuous legitimacy at best dependent upon his charisma, ability to mobilise the people, adapt to ever-changing circumstances, and to respect the essential egalitarian nature of the culture.

3.1 Mecca

What of the cities themselves? Lapidus points out that they "were simply the geographical locus of groups whose membership and activities were either larger or smaller than themselves."[4] The city was in reality little different from the periphery, lacking, it seems, a civic identity in the sense of a mayor or town

[1] Lindholm highlights such contemporary groups as the Kabyle Berbers of Algeria and the Kurds of Iran and Turkey
[2] A theory suggested by John Davis (1977)
[3] Lindholm (1996) p 27
[4] Lapidus (1969) p.73

council, for example. How, then, was authority structured in the city? According to Lapidus, tribal loyalties did not entirely vanish with urbanisation, although they intermingled with various occupational groups, youth clubs, and the like. Muhammad was a trader by profession and Mecca was founded on trade which, in turn, resulted in the development of craft guilds. These guilds, however, remained ideologically egalitarian in nature: "...differences of rank were blurred as artisans and masters laboured side by side in the same modest establishment, where usually members of the same guild and religious sect, lived in the same neighbourhoods, and often had fictive (or real) kinship relationships."[1] In the same way as the shepherd, the worker-master relationship was based on mutual contract that either could declare void. As will be shown later, although Lapidus is right to point out that trade guilds were important in Mecca, the view that these were largely egalitarian in nature seems to conflict with one of the main concerns expressed by Muhammad about Mecca: that it was *lacking* in egalitarianism, and had lost its Bedouin ethos.

Muhammad's war against property inequality presents us with one feature of the Golden Age Narrative. Coupled with this is the concern for the decline in Mecca of tribal solidarity, of *asabiyah*. Students of Islam often perceive Muhammad's 'conquest' of Mecca as merely an extension of the practice of nomadic *ghazw*, yet Muhammad did not end up plundering the city (contrary, it seems, from the wishes of many of his companions) and incorporating the wealth into his own tribe; rather he saw wealth, that is the accumulation of it, as essentially a cause of the breakdown of *asabiyah*, evident from his act of sanctifying and Islamicising Mecca. The wealth was retained by its owners, a practice that was evident throughout Arabian conquests, provided the conquered agreed to a system of taxation that, in theory at least, provided for a better distribution of wealth.[2]

Nomadic (*badawah*) and sedentary (*hadarah*) lifestyles constitute the two dominant forms of social organisation before and after *Jahiliyya*. Ibn Khaldun held that the *badawah* lifestyle comes historically before the *hadarah* because the

[1] Lindholm (1996) p.30
[2] Ibrahim (1990)

formation of a sedentary lifestyle can only occur once the nomadic has accumulated sufficient wealth to consider settling. Other historians, such as al-Mas'udi, also assert the chronological precedence of *badawah*. However, there are also accounts[1] that suggest a more dynamic scenario by which efforts at sedentarisation are continuously frustrated by the scarcity of water and fertile land, as well as the frequency of droughts. Therefore, the sedentary lifestyle is rather a seasonal, or temporal, affair interspersed with a nomadic existence of pastoralism, raids (*ghazw*) and a limited degree of hunting. This seemingly closed and cyclical existence can only be broken out of through commerce; not just trade amongst fellow nomadic tribes, but the need for trade with the wealthy neighbours of the Romans and the Sassanians. Arabia had little of its own to export, and so acted more as an intermediary between the rich civilisations. A city like Mecca, for example, originally survived as a way station for the northbound caravans from southern Arabia. As this trade grew and other intermediaries, such as Yemen, collapsed, so Mecca was able to grow in wealth and to establish its own markets. Mecca developed from a simple caravan station with an uncertain future, to a relatively complex centre of long-distance trade

As Ibn Khaldun observed, a sedentary existence could be the result of an increase in the wealth of the nomad. However, this must be appended with the still fragile existence of a sedentary lifestyle, that could so easily revert back to nomadism, and 'wealth' must be understood more precisely in this context as a more consistent above-subsistence-level acquisition that would allow for pastoralism to take place for any observable period of time. 'Wealth' in this sense is not something that could be profitably invested, at least not until the sedentary community is well-established to the extent that there is evidence of property inequalities and a deterioration of cooperation and mutual aid amongst the tribes, as appears to be the case with Mecca during the time of Muhammad.[2] Sedentarisation also offered a method of protecting the wealth attained from the vagaries of *badawah* life, as well as offering opportunities for greater wealth accumulation. Mecca, situated as it was far away from any agricultural

[1] For example, the works of Yaqut or of al-Bekri. See Bamyeh (1999) p.17
[2] Khazanov (1984)

community, had to rely upon trade for its very survival, unlike, say, Medina, which could engage in both trade and agriculture.

Following partially from Marx, Georg Simmel argued that money had the capability of establishing both a distance from an object and a link to it at one and the same time.[1] That is, the object itself, whether it be a camel, spices, etc., is indifferent to the value placed upon it and also the value cannot be determined purely by the essence of the object, but only in the context of such trade laws and demand and supply. As a result, the mind seeks a basis for value that could also possess the same certitude as objective existence. The result is a monetary form of valuation that all can identify with, yet is also abstracted from the essence of the object itself. This is significant as, once a value is added to an object, the object begins to be seen more within the context of this value and not as a pure, self-enclosed object. Value determines what and how objects will be seen. Objects in the world are not valued because of any intrinsic quality, but by some abstract monetary value. The Qur'an notes this emphasis on monetary value:

"Men are tempted by the lure of women and offspring, of hoarded treasures of gold and silver, of splendid horses, cattle, and plantations. These are the comforts of this life, but far better is the return to God."[2]

The interesting reference to "women and offspring" suggests too much pre-occupation with self-preservation, with the quest for immortality in this world. The recognised importance of hoarded treasure indicates a society based on a monetary economy rather than barter exchange, which is more the case with the nomadic code. For the nomad, items of value are recognised as also being very temporary, unlike the sedentary hoarding that is believed to outlive the hoarder. Those who spend their life accumulating treasures are observed to die just as those who live in poverty, as the pre-Islamic ode writer Tarafa notes.[3] The camel, considered amongst the nomad as the highest and most stable item of value in Tarafa's odes, is not considered in terms of a means of exchange, but rather as an enabler of life that itself is on the verge of perishing. For the nomad, existence is

[1] Simmel (1978) p.510
[2] Qur'an 3:14
[3] Bamyeh (1999) p. 24

terminated full-stop, it is '*dahr*'; a total, self-enclosed natural phenomenon, not a progression of moments that can be manipulated by some external divine agency, or a phenomenon that continues after death. Pre-Islamic belief, especially amongst the Bedouin who were not accustomed to the religions of the major powers or in dealing with abstractions, were naturally suspicious of the existence of a world beyond. Even in Mecca itself, where *Hanifs* (pre-Islamic monotheists) were very much a minority, materialism acted against an after-life.

Mecca re-identified itself as a community of traders and, as a consequence, this meant that the abstraction of objects in terms of their monetary value superseded more traditional nomadic values such as blood lineage, joint land ownership and mutual cooperation. What also develops is a kind of 'second-order' abstraction. Mecca, as a trading centre, not only placed a monetary value on objects themselves, but also on the other community that deals in those objects. By way of a more modern example, the importance economically of Japan for the Western world also resulted in a greater value placed upon Japanese culture, language and religion. Mecca, dealing as it was with the cultures of Rome and Persia, also placed a value on the beliefs of 'others'. The result was a variety of ideologies that intermixed in a relatively non-coercive manner, for Mecca was in no position to impose its own ideology upon another, if only for the fact that it would not have been an economically sensible tactic to adopt. Muhammad was brought up in this culture of 'liberalism towards other beliefs', even if such liberal generosity might have a hidden economic agenda.

The abstraction of value placed on objects, as being eternal, would also affect the religious beliefs of Meccans, evidenced by the increase in the number of *Hanifs* in the city. While Muhammad was being critical of the over-emphasis on placing economic value on objects and the resulting decline in *asabiyah,* he was also partly the very product of a monetary, sedentary society. However, although Islam is often regarded as being a product of the city, not nomadic existence, *it does not get away entirely from the values of nomadic existence, but rather calls for a return to what is best about it*, for example in its condemnation of such

nomadic values as paganism, infanticide, etc, while praising its values of *asabiyah.*

In considering why Islam emerged when it did, the need for a sedentary society that was able to abstract from its environment seems to be a necessary requirement. Nomadic existence could not achieve this by its very uncertain and malleable nature. In Mecca especially, as it established itself as an important trading centre, it also developed a set of legal and religious rules that were to inform the structure of the Islamic doctrine that was to follow. One such important rule was the *ashur haram* (the 'forbidden months') which coincided with the months during which the *suqs* (market-places) of the Hijaz and over half the peninsula were held. Therefore, the connection between commercial activity and religious-legal rules is evident: Some religious concepts concerning the regularity of path or time, such as pilgrimage, developed alongside the trade cycle. What is important here is that social transformation was made possible because of the ability to accumulate wealth. It is not insignificant that the name of 'Quraysh' can be traced to the Arabic '*taqarrush*', which means 'to accumulate' or 'to gain'. The concern was more with the accumulation of wealth as well as maintaining that wealth than with where one's next meal might come from or living within the limited time scope of the agricultural cycle.[1]

The Quraysh's concern with maintaining peace in Mecca was motivated by economics, for the very survival of Mecca relied upon trade unlike, for example Medina, which was a mix between Bedouin and agricultural communities. The problem for Mecca was enforcing such a peace, especially as the forbidden months, linked as they were to the spiritual, were not recognised as *haram* by all the tribes. Only with the coming of Islam were the sacred months established by Mecca to be enforced as universal for all tribes, being more closely tied to the acceptance (or, rather, *submission to*) of Islam as a universal belief. Traders to Mecca, in their double capacity as pilgrims, paid respect not so much to Mecca's *haram*, but rather their own idols contained within the Ka'ba. The *hajj* was not, it

[1] Significantly, agriculture played no important role in the economic life of Najd and Hijaz, with the exception of rare oases such as Ta'if

seems, originally meaning 'religious pilgrimage', but rather a well-established geographical trade route. The Ka'ba was no more than a house containing the idols of the tribes who practiced their own rituals and chants within a specified geographical (not spiritual) location.[1] This being the case, religion was something of a movable force that was subject to economic negotiation. That is, should the economic needs of the trade cycle alter, then the religion alters with it.

Mecca, despite its accumulation of wealth, must also have been aware of an acute sense of fragility and vulnerability, reliant as it was entirely upon trade and the willingness of the tribes to acquiesce to a system of *haram* that was supported by a delicate system of religious belief. Not only did Mecca lack any agriculture, it also seemed to be absent of even simple craftsmanship.[2] Bearing this in mind, it is perhaps more understandable why the Quraysh, once Islam had become a dominant force, could see the positive aspects of a religion that could be used to provide a stronger ideological base to their economic enterprises.

A picture of Mecca is, hopefully, being built up here: of a city dependent on trade for its very existence and, relative to the surrounding tribes, developing a complex social and religious structure. Further, the accumulation of wealth resulted in a distinct division of class: the wealthier Quraysh, the 'Abateh', lived in the neighbourhood of the *haram*, whereas the less fortunate Quraysh, the Zawaher, populated the rest of Mecca and the mountains surrounding it. These class differentiations also led to the concept of lending money to poorer relatives.[3] This resulted in an additional recognisable feature of class distinction. Mecca, with its class distinctions, its privileged role as trade and spiritual centre, its ability to abstract itself from the temporal, material world, and its social, religious and legal structure, all caused it to perceive itself (and perceived by others) as an oasis in a land of relative chaos and barbarism, of the world that was *Jahiliyya*. Not only in respect of Bedouin society, but further afield, as its competitors, such as Yemen, disintegrated and the Roman and Sassanian Empires were weakened by wars. Mecca also had to remain neutral in order to retain its economic status. However,

[1] Bamyeh (1999) p.32
[2] Simon (1989) p95, 102-103
[3] Wolf (1951)

the extent to which Mecca could maintain neutrality as it grew in economic status and became more exposed to the needs and interests of the major powers must be considered. For example, the Abyssinians, commonly in alliance with the Roman Empire, had made a number of military expeditions into Arabia, the best known being the Year of the Elephant. In this year, traditionally dated 570 CE (also the year of Muhammad's birth) saw Mecca attacked by an Abyssinian army with elephants. Muhammad's grandfather, Abd' al Muttalib[1] was the protector of the Ka'ba at the time and succeeded in defeating the Abyssinians. What is also interesting about this incident is its links with Muhammad; the 'fact' that he was born in such a prestigious year and that he is associated with a noble and spiritual lineage. Muhammad's birth also symbolises the beginning of the divine safekeeping of Mecca.

The two centuries preceding Islam experienced a stabilisation of a sedentary society and increased sophistication in terms of trade and social structures, especially in Mecca. However, the nomadic tribes remained largely excluded from these developments and pursued their own rather unsuccessful attempts to refrain from states of anarchy and poverty. Such attempts at political experimentation were a result of an increase in the number and intensity of *ghazw*[2] and anarchy. The reasons for such an increase in disputes are usually put down to the factors of population growth and a decline in the peninsular powers, such as Yemen, to act as mediators.

One such interesting attempt at social stability was the establishment of a 'monarchy' amongst the Kinda tribes in Najd during the middle of the fifth century CE. Kinda is the first record of a properly Bedouin 'monarchy' and is a unique attempt at a centralised nomadic society. It is interesting to consider why such a model was felt necessary and also why it ultimately failed after less than a century. Whereas Mecca engaged in economic alliances, called *ilaf*[3], the chief of

[1] '*Abd*', incidentally, means 'worshipper of' and became more common amongst the most noble of the Quraysh to distinguish themselves from the lower classes.
[2] Evidence from reference to a number of wars in the poetry immediately preceding Islam
[3] In an *ilaf* agreement, a trader purchased the right to move caravans into the lands of neighbouring states and engage in commerce in return for the giving of a percentage of the profit to the local ruler

the Kinda tribe, backed by the Yemenite monarch, formed specifically political alliances. The Kinda 'king', Akel al-Murar, attempted to build up a sedentary structure whereby subjugated tribes paid a tax, although the initial function of the 'king', or sheikh, was to act as an arbiter in disputes, maintaining relative order amongst the tribes. However, its failure can be based on a number of factors. Firstly, although the intention of the sheikh was to act as a respected arbiter, it was evident that the fiercely independent tribes would not give respect automatically and, also, their egalitarian nature resisted what was turning from a position of arbiter into a hierarchical monarchical system. In addition, a purely political alliance was not strong enough to be maintained unless it also had a strong economic base. Undoubtedly, Muhammad's interest in conquering Mecca was not purely from a spiritual point of view, but the importance in terms of its accumulated wealth and trade network. Taxation, in itself, is not enough to maintain alliances amongst tribes that would not only resent being taxed, but in most cases, were unfamiliar with the accounting complexities of such a system.

It is significant that Akel al-Murar's successor, 'Amru al-Maqsur, adopted the title 'Sayyed [chief] of Kinda', in the same way Muhammad avoided any links with monarchical systems of the time. Nonetheless, al-Maqsur did attempt to consolidate rule through marriages into the royal houses of, for example, Yemen. Under the third chief al-Harith, however, he expanded territory and continued to impose an alien kingly model upon an essentially Bedouin system, which included, amongst other things, the establishment of a standing army and further regulation of a taxation system. The collapse of the kingly system, though in some measure due to the change in political circumstances of external forces, such as the decline in power of Yemen and the withdrawal of support of Persia, must also be attributed to the imposition of an alien kingly system upon nomadic dynamics. Any attempts to maintain a monarchical system resulted in the killing of the chiefs, and the tribes returned to their old ways. This kingdom is important in terms of Islam as it indicates the fierce independence of the tribes and their reluctance to submit to any kind of hierarchal authority unless the leader has sufficient charisma to command respect, as indicated by the attempt of the tribes

to also return to their old ways and rebellion – the *hurub al-riddah* – with the death of Muhammad.

Whereas Mecca developed economically and culturally to resemble more the typical cosmopolitan cities of, for example, the Roman and Sassanian empires, the nomadic tribes deteriorated into increasing *ghazwas* and loss of self-identity. Reading the poetry of the period[1] immediately preceding Islam provides a picture of the Bedouin resorting to idealising their lives to contrast it with the life of the Meccan. The nomad, even if suffering from greater poverty and war than before, still maintains self-respect, honour and *asabiyah*, as opposed to the Meccan whose only concern is with material things and who does not look after his or her relatives. Mecca, for its part, saw the nomad as in a state of *Jahiliyya*, of ignorance and chaos. Yet the Bedouin had a point in its reference to Meccans as lacking *asabiyah,* a point that Muhammad himself was only too aware of. Mecca lacked any kind of 'finished product' in terms of ideology, with its mixture of *Hanif*-ism, paganism, and the monotheistic religions. The question has often arisen as to why Mecca did not adopt one of the already existing monotheistic religious traditions and the answer is usually given that this is against the whole independent nature of the Arabs: Why should they adopt the religion of a foreign culture? This may well be an important reason. However, the point should also be made that it is often assumed here that the monotheistic religions were, at this time, 'finished products' themselves. Given the countless studies of how religion is affected by its environment, there is every reason to suppose that the Christianity and Judaism available in Mecca would not come across as enclosed, exclusive, established ideologies existing within separate realms.

The generally accepted view is that Islam, at least as we would recognise it today, took some two hundred years to get to that stage. Yet the speed at which the new religion was able to establish itself is quite remarkable, if not unique, in history. To achieve this, it must have had a relatively strong ideological base. Paganism, though widespread in Arabia, was not 'strong' in the sense that it had a coherent

[1] For example, the odes of Tarafa, Zuhair and al-A'sha. I have relied on Arberry's (1957) translation for these.

set of beliefs and practices and a deep impression upon the Arabian mind that made their idols as 'other' as the monotheistic God. In fact, it was not unknown for 'worshippers' to curse their idols and ignore their guidance if they disagreed with it.[1] Idols were not considered to be role-models or guides for life or even to be particularly virtuous or reliable. What was more important was '*sunna*', the collective memories of past tradition. This intensity of the past is what also continued to exist in Mecca, and, of course, what was so strongly emphasised by Muhammad. And so, an essential element of Islam, of its 'soul', is the fact that it incorporates the collective memory of the Arab people, of its concept of *asabiyah* especially.

What unity that existed amongst the Arab people rested primarily within the trade cycle, rather than any political, cultural or ideological ethos. The Bedouin, for much of the year, lived in relative isolation from each other, which only heightened the socio-political importance of Mecca as a central focus for Bedouin identity, as a stable house amongst what was otherwise an environment of flux and uncertainty. Pilgrimage, as a periodic voyage towards sacred objects, the tribal idols, was an important ritual. The result is a dialectic of local spiritual autonomy coupled with reference to a holy centre, giving Mecca a spiritual centrality. Mecca, as a spiritual centre, would do well to promote itself as a holy centre in terms of its main basis for wealth, which was trade.

For Mecca to acquire a central status it had to conceive of itself as the home of a transcendental power greater than that of the tribal idols. The Bedouin pilgrimage to the Meccan *haram* was not because of the *haram* itself, but the idols that it held. In this respect, despite Mecca's importance as a centre of stability, it acted as little more than a cosy hotel for idols. However, there are references in pre-Islamic literature to 'Allah', a God that traces its origins to the very early days of Mecca, even before the Quraysh.[2] The Bedouin ritual and belief system should not, therefore, be seen as alien to monotheistic Islam; rather, such writers as

[1] Bamyeh (1999) p. 81
[2] *ibid.* p. 90

Kister[1] suggest that Islam was grounded more in *Jahiliyya* than in Jewish or Christian traditions.

The extent to which it can be shown that paganism played an important part in the development of Islam is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the recognition that there is a monotheistic element to pagan ritual should not go without a mention. Muslim 'apologists' frequently make reference to Islam's Judaeo-Christian heritage in a bid to link their religion with the inherited ideals of Western belief whilst attempting to make a sharp contrast with *Jahiliyya.* However, this ignores features that already existed that were not Judaeo-Christian in nature. For example, Kister[2] refers to the *talbiyat* (responses to divine calling), which were uttered during the pilgrimage to Mecca. According to Kister, there were around two dozen different *talbiyat* that circulated amongst the tribes. These *talbiyat* do stress tribal identity in their compilations, but also simultaneously affirm a belief in a supreme God. God occupied a higher realm within a henotheistic hierarchy, but was not a product of abstract modal metaphysics; rather He represented a 'supra-idol' that held court in the kingdom of Mecca. However, such a conception of God (a conception, evidenced from the Satanic verses, that Muhammad himself was under some pressure to accept) would always be susceptible to competition from other gods, and even for tribes to house the *haram* in their territories under their own god. What was needed was for Allah, the God of Mecca, to be elevated to a God that was universal and to be worshipped by all, while maintaining Mecca as the holy centre.

As already noted, the increasing complexity of trade that existed in the time of Muhammad – no longer simply buying and selling, but borrowing, insuring and valuation – made the need for a high God all the more urgent, given the lack of a strong state apparatus to regulate affairs. It is not an arbitrary act that commercial agreements are, and have been since the beginning of Islam, opened with the statement "In your name, our Allah", thus presenting Allah as the regulating authority. The term 'Islam' is conventionally translated as 'submission',

[1] Kister (1980)
[2] *ibid*

'surrender' or 'resignation' (to Allah). However, according to one thesis[1], it can also be rendered as 'defiance of death'. This is significant in that it suggests that Islam presented a very early eschatology that this life is not all that there is. If life is not exclusively earthly, then justice can be meted out in the next life. In this sense, being bound by the will of Allah insured that followers would abide by their commercial contracts, or suffer the consequences in the next life.

The promotion of a belief in the next life has its obvious Marxist interpretation. The Bedouin, as they entered the city of Mecca as it developed in wealth, would have grown increasingly aware of the difference in their status. Such stark contrasts in wealth and position could have had serious revolutionary consequences if a belief in divine justice had not been encouraged. The concept of resurrection allowed for recompense for those who perceived themselves as denied in comparison with the Meccans. Hence, the concept of the perfect Islamic state imposes itself upon the empirical state as that which is contrasted with the hierarchical and social view of resurrection. In this way, Islam can maintain the status quo with the promise of reward in the hereafter and would fall under the Nietzschean attack levelled against Christianity. *However, this is not the true soul of Islam, but a false God.*

[1] Bravmann (1972) pp.7-12

Chapter Six

The Soul as Deriving from the Time of the Prophet and *Rashidun*

"This [the Sunna of the Prophet] is the second source. It shows the way in which the Holy Prophet translated the ideology of Islam in the light of Qur'anic guidance into practical shape, developed it into a positive social order and finally elevated it to a full-fledged Islamic State."

- Mawdudi, *First Principles of the Islamic State* [1]

"Our supreme insights must – and should! – sound like follies, in certain cases like crimes, when they come impermissibly to the ears of those who are not predisposed and predestined for them. The exoteric and the esoteric as philosophers formerly distinguished them, among the Indians as among the Greeks, Persians and Moslems, in short wherever one believed in an order of rank and *not* in equality and equal rights – differ one from another not so much in that the exoteric stands outside and sees, evaluates, measures, judges from the outside, not from the inside: what is more essential is that this class sees things from below – but the esoteric sees things *from above*!"

- Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil.*[2]

1. The Prophet: Sources

"One of the Prophet's biographers ['The Biography of the Prophet, by Ahmed bin Zayni Dahlan] narrates the story of the man who came upon the Prophet, peace be upon him, to take care of a matter. As he stood before him, an intense shiver and fear overtook him. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'Be calm, for I am no king nor a subduer, for I am the son of a woman of Quraysh who used to eat dried meat in Mecca.' And it has been said in the *hadith* that when the Prophet was given the choice by the angel Israfil of being a king-prophet or a worshipping prophet, the Prophet, peace be upon him, looked up to Gabriel, peace be upon him, as his consultant. Gabriel looked down to the ground, indicating humility. And as the story goes, Gabriel indicated for him to be humble. So the Prophet said: 'A worshipping prophet.' As is evident, this makes it very clear that the

[1] Mawdudi (1967) p.6
[2] Nietzsche (1998) Section 30

Prophet, peace be upon him, was not a king, and did not seek kingship, nor did he, peace be upon him, desire it."[1]

The reference to the Prophet in contemporary discourse also moulds that very discourse. If the archetype of Muhammad is perceived as having some form of political authority, then that is how an Islamic state – and the perfect ruler of an Islamic state – will be defined. If, however, Muhammad is perceived as being 'merely a messenger' then the Prophet's stamp upon political discourse fades into insignificance: one must look to other sources for guidance.

What are our sources for an examination of Muhammad's authority? Although the Qur'an makes reference to the Prophet, it reveals little about Muhammad's life. However, one obvious conclusion that can be reached from a simple reading of the Medinan suras is that the message changes from the earlier (Meccan) suras. The message at Mecca was concerned with the nature of God (One, just, merciful, etc.) and directed towards the conversion of individuals. As has been shown, Mecca was suffering from a form of 'social malaise', consisting of a breakdown of old tribal values – of, in Khaldunian terms, its *asabiyah* – and that Muhammad's role here was to warn the people of Mecca of the destruction of their old values and the subsequent decline into decadence and decay. The reason why many of the first converts to Islam were among the disadvantaged people of Mecca is because he was seen as their supporter; giving a voice to this silent and suffering group. Muhammad's role changed, however, when he migrated – together with his followers – to Medina. The Medinan suras were more concerned with the social consequences of such beliefs. In other words, Muhammad was no longer a head of a small religious congregation, but of an entirely separate political community, the *umma*[2]. As a result, there is more legal material in the Medinan suras, such as rules concerning *halal* and *haram.*

It has been demonstrated that strong social structures already existed at the time of Muhammad; and that society of any kind cannot function without them. Thus a corpus of ideas on justice, subjugation, and economics worked reasonably

[1] al-Raziq (1998)
[2] 2: 142

effectively. Any contribution Muhammad made to the formation of a political system would, at its maximum, have allowed a differing approach or attitude to institutional and organisational attitudes that existed already. The problem we face when we talk of such systems as socialism, communism and so on as being alien to Islam; of them being borrowed ideologies and not inherently Islamic, is that it is very difficult – if not impossible – to isolate Islam from other ideologies in the first place. All ideologies borrow from each other. In the same way that the forms of authority that existed in sixth century Arabia would not have been totally unique or would have sprung from nothing, the same must be said of Muhammad's contribution to political thought. Even adopting the Islamic belief that Muhammad was an empty vessel who was 'filled' by Allah (and therefore assumes that Muhammad's contribution was Allah's contribution); this does not exclude entirely the contributions made to political thinking of previous revelations. Unless, of course, one adopts the attitude that all previous revelations are *entirely* wrong, which would not be an Islamic attitude to adopt.[1]

In terms of being governed by narrative, the importance of *hadith* cannot be over-emphasised. In fact, it is not going too far to describe this corpus as semi-sacred; for it contains within it the paradigmatic acts and pronouncements of the Prophet and, in its wider context, the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs. These pronouncements form the mass of legal precedents upon which Islamic law - the *sharia* - is erected. Therefore, the tapping of *hadith* for guidance is a political act. *Hadith* literature provides an invaluable view of Muhammad's authority. For example, such *hadith* as the following:

"That which the prophet of God hath made lawful is like that which God himself has made."[2]

"I have left you two things, and from them you will not stray as long as you hold them fast. The one is the book of God, the other is the law of his prophet."[3]

[1] Muslims believe that all prophets were honest, intelligent, sinless and chosen (mustafa)
[2] Robson (1990), 1, p.43
[3] *ibid.*, 1, p.48

However, importantly, Muhammad himself seems to have recognised that his authority has limits; it is by no means supreme:

"My sayings do not abrogate the word of God, but the word of God can abrogate my sayings."[1]

"I am a mere human being. When I command you to do anything about religion in the name of God, accept it, but when I give you my personal opinion about worldly things, bear in mind that I am a human being, and no more".[2]

The earliest biography (*sira*), by Ibn Ishaq (704-767), is not extant: we have the edited version by Ibn Hisham (d. 833), and a section of Al-Tabari's account of the Mecca period, which also uses Ibn Ishaq.[3] Montgomery Watt praises Ishaq's material. [4] Other praised *siras* for their reliability are the later works by al-Waqidi (d. 822)[5] and his secretary Ibn Sa'd[6]. In addition, there are also the six *sahih* (sound) *hadith* of al-Bukhari (810-70), Muslim (817-74), Abu Daud (817-88), al-Nasai (d. 915), al-Darimi (797-868) and Ibn Maja (824-86). All have been criticised in recent years[7], although Bukhari's[8] is still the most critically acclaimed by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.[9] Shi'a Islam has its own Four Books (*al-kutub al-arb'ah*), although they do not differ greatly in content compared with the Sunni *hadith.*[10]

Within the *sira-hadith*, there is much divergent and contradictory material. For example, on the number of campaigns Muhammad led after the *hijrah*; dispute

[1] Robson (1990), 1, p.49
[2] Siddiqui (1975)V 4:1259
[3] The al-Tabari account ends with the siege of Medina five years before the death of Muhammad. I have used the English translation by Poonawala (1990)
[4] Watt (1953), p. xii
[5] Al-Waqidi may well have had Shi'a sympathies and his work uses some independent sources which help to corroborate Ibn Ishaq. Although neither have met with universal praise, I have made much use of Guillaume's translation (1955)
[6] Ibn Sa'd may also have had Shi'a sympathies as he claims that Ali, not Abu Bakr, was the first Muslim convert. I have used the English translation by S. Moinul Haq (1967)
[7] For example, Goldziher (1967), Schacht (1950, 1964), Coulson (1994) all have argued that the majority of *hadith* were fabricated for ulterior motives.
[8] Translated into English by Asad (1981) and also Khan (1987).
[9] For example, Mernissi (1991) – who provides an admirable critique of certain *hadith* – recounts how Bukhari refused to go to the local Amir of Bakhara's house to read portions of his collection, refusing to 'drag it into the antechambers of sultans' (p. 45). Thus, Bukhari, at least avoids the accusation of political patronage and subsequent bias.
[10] Nasr (1993), p.19

over the first male convert[1], the order of the *ghazwa*, the number of visits Muhammad made to Mt. Hira, the order of revelations and the period of time between the first and second revelation, and so on. Nonetheless, by making use of various sources, as well as more contemporary biographies that make use of different *sira*[2], we can reasonably make certain assertions despite the problematic nature of divergent and contradictory material.[3] In particular, materials relating to principle events, achievements and speeches in Muhammad's later career in Medina (which is of more concern here) is generally considered by contemporary biographers as extremely reliable.[4] It seems extremely speculative and untenable to adopt the view of Patricia Crone and Michael Cook[5], who have stated that Muhammad's life recorded in the *sira* is almost entirely the invention of later generations. They envision the real Muhammad as a Messianic-type figure who led a movement to repossess Jerusalem (the Qur'an, they argue, was posthumously composed during the Caliphate of 'Abd-al Malik). Islam, as such, developed a separate identity much later, and was really a hybrid during Muhammad's time, more closely related to Judaism. Although this view seems rather extreme, as well as being founded upon rather weak foundations, it does raise the important point – much more widely acknowledged today – that Islam took some time to establish a separate identity for itself.

2. Authority of the Prophet: The Transhistorical versus the Historical

What did it mean to be a prophet in Arabia? Why did the people give Muhammad such authority and how should it be seen in the context of prophethood as understood in the Western 'Judaeo-Christian' sense? It should be pointed out that

[1] Importantly, in terms of political authority, some Sunni collections *also* put Ali as the first male convert!
[2] Most notably, that of Lings (1983)
[3] It should be noted that Muslims and non-Muslims are quite free to examine *hadith* material critically to see if it conforms to Islamic values, and – more recently with more readily available translations – readily do so.
[4] See, for example Bennett (1998) p. 63
[5] Crone (1977). A book that was banned in Egypt and generally condemned by many Muslim scholars.

Muhammad was, in fact, one of many who proclaimed themselves prophets during that era and location. Not only that, but many of these prophets referred to themselves as prophets of Allah, and as descendents in the Abrahamic line. During Muhammad's time, there already existed a vaguely defined religion of Abraham, which anticipated the coming of a prophet to re-establish a forgotten tradition, rather than begin a new one. Therefore, a coming prophet would both make a break with the present while reasserting the authority of the past. At least one individual is reported to have refused to follow Muhammad because he himself had hoped to be the anticipated prophet.[1] The existing anticipation of a prophet may help to partly explain Muhammad's initial failure in Mecca and the fact that he failed to achieve the superhuman standards that were expected of a prophet. Even when his authority was more established there was much dissension and declarations that Muhammad did not fit within the Abrahamic tradition (*din Ibrahim*).[2] However, such notable figures as the Christian Waraqh Ibn Nawfal helped paved the way for Muhammad by saying that he was the anticipated prophet that was promised by Moses and Jesus. Even after Muhammad's death, some claimants to prophecy – notably Musaylimah – posed a very serious threat to the nascent religion by disputing Muhammad's status as the last and true prophet.[3]

The question as to why the Arab community should choose prophethood as its legitimate authority at that moment in time is one that is very rarely asked and, indeed, difficult to answer. Undoubtedly, the anticipation of prophethood may have been a contributory factor, but Muhammad's lack of 'superhuman' qualities – at least what was expected of prophethood – acted more *against* Muhammad achieving legitimisation than for. Why, then, didn't the community opt for a more common and earthly ruler such as a sheikh, especially when one considers the traditional society of the time that abhors novelty? The importance here is in the past; not seeing Muhammad's prophethood as coming from 'above', but rather as

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[1] A long list of anticipators is cited in al-Alusi, (*Bulugh al-Arab fi Ma'rifat Ahwal al-'Arab*, 1954) vol. 2, 254. See Bamyeh, p. 98

[2] For an extended discussion on the Medinan opposition to Muhammad's authority see Gil (1987) pp.65-69

[3] Shaban (1976) Vol 1. p.20

a product of tradition that is firmly entrenched in the empirical world. Yet, at the same time, the very concept of prophethood *requires* Transhistoricism. One cannot be a prophet of God and be purely Historical. However, to understand the motivation for the adoption of prophethood it needs to be seen within a historical context.

2.1 Mohammed Bamyeh and the Transhistorical Prophet

In assessing the authority of Muhammad it is helpful to contrast two views, one nesting in the Transhistorical camp, the other in the Historical. As an example of the Transhistorical, Mohammed Bamyeh[1], in *The Social Origins of Islam*, places great emphasis upon Muhammad's prophetic authority as an explanation for his legitimacy. According to traditional accounts, the encounter with the people of Medina occurred during the pilgrimage season when a half dozen men of the Khazraj clan met the prophet and returned to Medina to tell their people of this new prophet. The next year, twice as many met with Muhammad and promised loyalty to Islam. By the time Muhammad and his followers left Mecca to go to Medina, most of the people of that city had already become his followers. According to Bamyeh, Muhammad, therefore, already held a position of monarchical 'distance' by not having even set foot in the city before the majority of the population had already submitted to Islam. It is much more difficult to place faith in a prophet when you can see him walking, talking, eating and, generally, being very human', especially when this is coupled with the anticipatory demands upon a prophet at that time.

According to Bamyeh, Muhammad deliberately adopted the practice of sending a representative to Medina before his own arrival. The representative would instruct the populace in the teachings of Islam and also help to develop the image of the prophet as possessing qualities of detached remoteness and increase the anticipation. Because the prophet would not be present, he could not be called upon to prove his prophetic credentials. Even when Muhammad came to Medina

[1] Bamyeh (1999)

he refrained from ruling directly, instead delegating authority to twelve *nuqaba'* ('keepers' or 'overseers') who were selected by the Khazraj and the Aws. These *naqibs* were accountable to the indigenous Muslim population of Medina, the *Ansar* ('backers'), while Muhammad was accountable to those Muslims who migrated to Medina, the *Muhajirun* ('migraters'). It is perhaps no coincidence, Bamyeh argues, that twelve *naqibs* were chosen, following the example of Jesus' twelve disciples.

The pre-Islamic world had many 'sages', many wise men who were respected by their communities. Muhammad, Bamyeh argues, was no sage; he was, according to the traditions, an illiterate from a relatively ordinary background. What gave Muhammad legitimacy to rule, however, was prophetic knowledge. Unlike the wise man, the prophet is sent by God and his knowledge comes from God. Who that prophet happens to be in earthly terms is irrelevant. In fact:

"Lord, Sovereign of all sovereignty, You bestow sovereignty on whom You will and take it away from whom You please; You exalt whomever You will and abase whomever You please."[1]

Muhammad did not choose to become a prophet, he did not strive to acquire this status. He was entirely passive in the reception of God's message, and responded with fear, concern that he was going mad, and even contemplated suicide. What gave Muhammad authority to enforce a moral and social code rested primarily, ***not with any historical, earthly credentials he may possess, but in his possession of this God-given foreknowledge.*** The very first *sura* revealed to Muhammad describes God as the one "who by the pen taught man what he did not know".[2] This presents the prophet with immense power, for the knowledge he possess is one of certainty:

"A leader must know and must have anticipated the way things are from an earlier point of commencement. So he has to choose a point of beginning earlier than all possible others...Time is not to run its natural course but is to be made by the

[1] 3:26
[2] 96:1

author. He shall decide the course for the rest of the day, rather than wait for the traces to be formed for him by the natural flow of time."[1]

More than that, the prophet is not so much the *author* of time, but the *knower* of time, for God is the author. For a leader to know what to do makes him the Philosopher-King, and his subjects have no choice but to follow without question. Such authority provides its own legitimacy. However, this legitimacy can be seriously weakened if foreknowledge fails to bring the right results. This is always a risk for any proclamation of prophethood; to be shown to be fallible. It was for this reason, Muhammad had to maintain a distance from the people and why Medina was ideal in this respect. In Mecca he was too well known, whereas in Medina, Bamyeh argues, he had already been idealised without so much as setting a foot within its territory. In Medina the message, the Qur'an, came before the messenger. Muhammad is the imparter of knowledge, of a destiny, that was also given to the Prophet by a distant God, via the archangel Gabriel. The importance of 'distance', of 'otherness', that is made earthly, has its risks. To protect the infallibility of the messenger, any knowledge that fails to produce its teleology is not the fault of the messenger, but of the interpreter.

2.2 The Medinan Constitution and the Historical Prophet

Rather than rely upon Bamyeh's speculations, the historical-critical approach will appeal to historical documentation for its sources. Apart from *hadith* and the Qur'an, other sources are in existence, for example, letters sent by Muhammad to various rulers, treaties between the Prophet and other tribes[2] . In particular, the Constitution of Medina[3], possibly constructed some five years after the *hijra,* is important here because, if it is genuine then it gives a good insight into the authority of Muhammad and how the new order of the *umma* was perceived. The question, of course, is whether the document is, in fact, genuine. Patricia Crone[4] has argued that, as it does not exist in its original form it may well contain

[1] Bamyeh (1999) p. 160
[2] See, for example, Ibn Sa'd (1967)
[3] An English translation can be found in Watt (1956) pp. 221-5.
[4] Crone (1995)

extraneous material leading it to be unreliable as a source. In fact, with a few exceptions, the authenticity of this document is widely acknowledged, although there is disagreement as to whether it is a single agreement or a combination of two or more agreements reached over a long period.[1]

The document begins:

"In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate!
This a writing of Muhammad the prophet between the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Medina and those who follow them and are attached to them and who crusade along with them.
They are a single community (*umma*) distinct from (other) people."[2]

Following on from this are nine articles stating that each of the nine subdivisions of the community (that is, the 'Emigrants of Quaraysh" and the eight clan groups of the Aws and Khazraj) are to be responsible for blood-money and similar matters for its own members. Muhammad possessed a special position as he was acknowledged as a Prophet who received revelation from God and would have given him the status of arbiter of disputes (Article 23 of the Constitution: "Wherever there is anything about which you differ, it is to be referred to God and to Muhammad"). But this does not mean anything more than the acceptance of decisions based on the revelations which Muhammad received. A verse in the Quran, *sura* 42:10, prescribes only the referring of disputes to God, that is, to a decision through revelation. This is obviously not the same as saying that Muhammad had ultimate political authority in all matters. Rather, he was one of nine chiefs and would often have to proceed with tact and mutual consultation.

Montgomery Watt[3] has suggested that Muhammad would have made some form of 'contract' with Medina before the *hijrah*, possibly along the lines of the Constitution of Medina, by which the Emigrants of Quaraysh acted like a clan of its own with an alliance with the eight Medinan clans amongst common enemies. Essentially this new body politic was on old tribal lines, the only difference being

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[1] Rodinson (1980) p.152; al-'Umari (1991), 1, pp. 99-102
2Watt (1956)pp.221-5
3Watt (1956)

the *umma* which went beyond kinship and alliance to religion. But the relation between political and economic motives to religious ones is not always so clear. As already stated, Muhammad's authority was accepted as 'arbiter' and, after the Treaty of Hunayn in 630, there was a constant stream to Medina of deputations from tribes and parts of tribes who wanted to become allies of Muhammad. In return the new tribes promised to obey Allah and His Prophet and to pay *zakat*. It was essential for the survival of small tribes to have a protector, and the payment of an affordable tribute and a little homage would have been worth their while.

At this point it is worth considering the views of the Muslim scholar Ali Bulaç (born in Turkey, 1951) who has vigorously argued that Islam represents a viable alternative to Western political systems that would help to solve many of the ills associated with the West. His more recent studies have focussed on the issue of pluralism, especially of the ethnic and religious sense, and he cites the Medinan Constitution as an archetype. His research provides us with invaluable insights on this Constitution. Bulaç notes the uniqueness of Medina in the context of the Arabian peninsula[1], in that its social structure did not rely upon the traditional blood and kinship ties but, for the first time, a group of people from totally divergent geographical, ethnic and cultural backgrounds gathered and identified themselves as a distinct social group. The Constitution, then, can tell us much of how this community was able to co-exist.

At the political level, Muhammad was the chief of one of the nine kinship groups which, in total, consisted of a confederacy. Of course, all nine groups were *'muslim'* (although the term would not have existed at that time) in the seventh century sense - - as discussed in detail in Chapter Four - that it was understood, for Muhammad was more concerned with unifying the warring tribes, rather than their 'submission'. If we could adopt the rather simplistic view that this community was entirely 'Muslim' - as in the Transhistorical sense - then it could be argued that there were no such problems with pluralism, other than those of the Jews who, eventually, ceased to be a force in Medina anyway. However, this is a simplistic view and goes against what evidence exists.

[1] Bulaç (1998) p.169

Bamyeh's assertion that most of Medina was already Muslim before the arrival of Muhammad conflicts with the evidence. Bulaç notes that Muhammad had a population census taken where the inhabitants of the town were recorded one by one in a notebook. According to this census, around 10,000 people lived in Medina, of which only 1,500 were 'Muslims' (in the sense of the acceptance of Muhammad as the last prophet, that is Transhistorical Muslims), 4,000 were Jews, and 1,500 were polytheists. In such an environment it is implausible to suppose that Muhammad was able to 'convert' all those to Islam and establish himself in some 'kingly' role. Bulaç makes reference to the early Meccan sura, "To you your religion, to me my religion"[1] as the political principle that would have likewise applied to Medina. This seems most credible, especially when one peruses the contents of the Medinan Constitution. What comes across is Muhammad's concern with co-existing through the realisation of a pluralist social project based on religious and legal autonomy; it could not have thrived any other way:

"Of course, the religious message would be propagated; but no one would be coerced to convert through force and pressure; those who converted would meet no opposition, as they had in Mecca."[2]

When the *Mahajirun* arrived in Medina, the chiefs of the families gathered and the first twenty-three articles of the Medinan Constitution were decided upon. After their completion, Muhammad then consulted the representatives of the non-Muslim social groups and all of them came to an agreement of the basic principles constituting the foundations of this new 'city-state' of Medina. This 'constitution' was recorded in writing and, according to tradition; this is the Medinan Constitution that we have now. Importantly, Bulaç emphasises that this Constitution was the product of ***negotiation and social consensus,*** not a list of commands forced upon the community by Muhammad and the Ansar. As Bulaç rightly points out, it is "unimaginable"[3] that Muhammad, sneaking out of Mecca in the middle of the night to migrate to Medina to seek refuge there, would then

[1] 109:6
[2] Bulaç (1998) p.170
[3] Bulaç (1998) p.173

be in a position to impose a text of agreement that serves his own interests and purposes on a people that were stronger both militarily and numerically. However dire the situation in Medina may have been in terms of civil strife, it goes completely against what this work has considered concerning the Arab mentality to believe they could be so compliant, even given Muhammad's undoubted 'charisma' and status as a Prophet of God.

Rather than Bamyeh's assertion that it was Muhammad's 'prophetic foreknowledge', the civil strife that existed in Medina must be one of the main factors why its populace were prepared to accept the decrees of the Constitution. Medina had experienced around 120 years of wars and conflicts and was certainly ready to gamble upon the possibility of a unifying leader, particularly as there appeared to be no possibility of finding a formula for peace and stability within the existing social structure and forces. Perhaps most importantly, because of constant war, Medina suffered economically, and it is Muhammad's organising and economic prowess that was particularly appealing. The urgent problem of the time, then, was to end the conflicts and to find a formula that would allow for co-existence for all sides. The Constitution sets this out as its primary aim and, importantly, to achieve this without resorting to domination, but rather to participation by all social groups. According to the Constitution, 'Muslims' will live as free people according to the principles of the Qur'an with the same rights applying to 'non-Muslims'; keeping in mind that with 'rights' come 'duties', those of a respect and adherence to justice and righteousness.

Bulaç proceeds to determine a series of "constitutive principles" that can be drawn from the Medinan Constitution in the process of any constitution for an Islamic state. Firstly, keeping in mind that the contract was established amongst a diversity of ethnic, religious and social groups, the articles of any contract must reflect the common interest of the community as a whole, whilst differences belong to the "autonomous sphere"[1]. During the compiling of such a contract, the representatives of all groups should be present, and its approval from all groups through negotiation.

[1] Bulaç (1998) p.174

Secondly, participation – rather than domination – is to be the starting point, because any form of totalitarianism or unitarianism would not allow for diversification. In the Medinan Constitution, special mention is made of the 'polytheists'[1], which stresses that they may not make any political or military relationships with the polytheists of Mecca. This can be put down to the understandable anxiety over the allegiance of all parties to Medina. In the same way, the Jews were eventually expelled from the *umma* because of their treachery and the subsequent danger to what was a very fragile community, rather than anything to do with their religion. In actual fact, after the battles of Badr and Uhud, the polytheists had proved their loyalty so that they were able to continue to live in Medina without interference. Bulaç asserts that a conclusion can be drawn from the Constitution that any constitution would ensure complete cultural and legal autonomy amongst the various religious and ethnic groups:

"In such areas as religion, law-making, judiciary, education, trade, culture, art, and the organisation of daily life, each group will remain as it is and will express itself through the cultural and legal criteria it defines."[2] Article 42 of the Constitution states that cases of murder and fighting shall be taken to Muhammad, but in this sense the Prophet acts as 'arbiter' and is a position that was agreed amongst the various groups when situation arise when conflicts cannot be settled internally: "In this arrangement, the Prophet did not act as a 'judge' but as a 'referee'."[3]

A third constitutive principle is that several, rather than one, legal system may coexist. Bulaç states that not only was this a practice in Medina, where 'non-Muslims' were allowed their own courts and laws, but was also a practice that existed amongst the *dhimmis* up until the final days of the Ottomans in the early twentieth century. Although Islamic law and religion is binding upon Muslims, this does not extend to non-Muslims, although there are the 'general guidelines' that bind all. This is an important point, for although the different social-ethnic-religious groups may have their own laws and courts, this must not conflict with the universal principles of Islam, that is *Historical* Islam. *In this sense, the*

[1] Article 20B
[2] Bulaç (1998) p.174
[3] Bulaç (1998) p.175

Medinan Constitution can be seen as 'above' the Qur'an, Torah etc., although at the same time encompassing the general principles embodied within these scriptures. Articles 4 and 11 of the Constitution, for example, endorse the autonomy of social groups in the sense that the tribes shall compensate for bloodshed (as was the custom) and shall ransom war prisoners, and they will also settle their financial liabilities amongst themselves, provided these can be determined through mutual agreement. However, the guilty will not be protected by tribal blood ties and kinship, but are answerable to the whole of society. Crime and punishment, therefore, are individualised: when someone commits a crime they are not protected by their tribe, whatever the status of that tribe, but that individual is held responsible for a crime against the state.[1]

Two distinct terms in the Constitution need to be defined. The first, *umma*, refers to the political union of all the religious and ethnic groups, not just the Transhistorical Muslims. The second term, ***haram***, is used in the Constitution to refer to the defended frontier of the political union. While the Constitution demands full obedience to the rule of law and binding to every individual, which may be considered the judiciary of the *umma*, the act of war has been passed to central government[2]. Although solidarity against attack is important and all parties to the Constitution agree to mutual financial and military responsibilities, this common responsibility does not stretch in wars fought in the name of *religion*.[3] This is a clear indication that affairs of the state are distinct from affairs of religion: if the Historical Muslims are at war with others for religion, the Jews and polytheists of Medina are not obliged to join them.

So, while the Constitution transfers power to the central authority (effectively, the 'state') in judiciary, defence, and the proclamation of war, the fields of legislation, culture, science, the arts, economy, religion, education, health and other services are left to civil society. What, ultimately, is important here is that,

[1] Articles 12, 13, 21
[2] Articles 17, 18
[3] Article 45

"The document concerned [the Medinan Constitution] is not an artificial utopia or a theoretical political exercise. It has entered written history as a legal document employed systematically and concretely from 622 to 632...Briefly defined, *the Medina Document is the legal manuscript for political unity.*"[1]

Bulaç emphasises that those who belong to different religions and belief can lead their lives according to their own religious and legal systems so long as they do not enter into war with Muslims.[2] According to the archetype of the Medinan Constitution, those who do not wish to be Muslim – whether they be Jewish, Christian, polytheists, secular, or atheist – are free to choose their own religion, worldview or ideology, and to adhere to whatever legal system fits into their worldview. In this respect, they form a 'legal group' which must be respected by the *umma* as a whole. These legal groups are independent with respect to activities such as legislation, culture, education, science, economy, health and so on. Political power is internalised by the contractors to the Constitution so that politics is to be understood more as an "art of governance that makes the organisation of the parties possible"[3] Importantly, Bulaç stresses that the Medinan Constitution, which was implemented by Muhammad, is not in any way independent of the Qur'an, but, as part of the Prophet's *sunna*, it is the "manifestation of the Qur'an and a practical model of the Qur'an's life-giving and redeeming principles"[4]. The role of the state, therefore, is limited to executive activity and that the executive itself will be limited to the provision of common and indivisible services. Political participation is based on participation from the bottom up, rather than on a singular sovereignty.

At this stage, the extent to which the state could be described as 'Islamic' was only in the sense that those who did not put their faith in Allah (i.e. 'People of the Book') could only be a 'dependent tribe'. Certainly, it was to the advantage of tribes to convert, but the fact that many tribes returned to their paganism and broke away from the *umma* so soon after the death of Muhammad suggests that

[1] Bulaç (1998) p.176
[2] 60:8-9
[3] Bulaç (1998) p.177
[4] *ibid.* p.178

this conversion can not be seen as particularly sincere and that economic and political motives were paramount.

When recognised as 'Prophet', Muhammad was recognised as leader, but the degree of how much policy he could make is debatable. Nonetheless, like everything else in his career, Muhammad's leadership was Arab in nature: it was deeply rooted in Arab tradition in the sense that leaders emerged and were recognised as they proved their abilities; claims to 'divine authority' alone would have been inadequate and unconvincing to such highly individualistic people. In the Weberian sense, Arab legitimacy of authority rested on both charisma and on Arab tradition; whilst possessing the charismatic aspect, Muhammad had to back up the traditional element by appealing to traditional Arab values of mutual co-operation and tribal ethics. Such 'power of office' as there was in seventh century Arabia relied on the ability to engage successfully in trade, for trade was essentially the rational basis for society. In such circumstances, the powers of the leader were those of persuasion rather than command. Of course, Muhammad's power as leader was significantly supplemented by his religious authority and the Constitution of Medina, but his often repeated call for obedience from his followers is a clear indication of his difficulties in this respect. From the biographies of Muhammad, he does not comes across as a 'distant' monarchical figure, but very much 'human' and concerned with the day-to-day affairs of the people. More to the point, from what has been presented as the character of the Arab in this thesis, especially that which existed outside of Mecca, the people of Medina would not tolerate such 'distance' from any leader.

In less than ten years, Muhammad had succeeded in setting up the necessary mechanism for a great trade centre. His 'innovation' appears to rest primarily in his organisational skills rather than in religious matters. He insisted that his religion had always been there; he was calling for a restoration of the proper application of the principles of this 'eternal truth', thus promising justice and salvation for his followers. The social organisation of co-operation among all members of the community in all their activities was based on Arab traditions and

shaped in Arab forms, although now the emphasis had shifted from the clan to the *umma*.

Nonetheless, regardless of the reality of Muhammad's power, it must not be forgotten that, in terms of an archetype for a ruler of an Islamic state, the Prophet was both a political and a religious figure and was held accountable in both spheres of action. There was a blending of religious and state institutions – however fragile that may have been – in the personality of the ruler. Historically, however, when we examine the life of Muhammad, it appears that there was a separation between religious and secular, and that even the Prophet was limited in what is traditionally regarded as the 'political'. So far as can be ascertained, though Muhammad decided whether there was to be peace or war, there was no standing army as such and each *ghazwa* required an initial summoning of the tribal chiefs, who then appealed for volunteers from their ranks. Legal decisions could only be carried out with the endorsement and consent of the tribal chiefs and, in fact, much 'legislation' as such would have taken place without need to refer to Muhammad unless it was to cause dispute. There was no regular police force, and little in the way of administration. It seems that this 'Islamic state' – this Perfect Islamic state – was extremely fluid with little administrative apparatus; relying upon the charisma of the Prophet, together with his own flexibility in matters of state, and the very Arab custom of egalitarianism and suspicion of unmerited authority.

Importantly, Muhammad's 'conquest' of Mecca could not have been achieved without the realisation by the Quraysh that Muhammad would do little to interfere with their position. An acceptance of *zakat* seemed a fair sacrifice in return for peace along the trade routes and a share in the prosperity that the *umma* allowed. Muhammad did not attack the traditionalists; in fact, the new 'merchant princes' were at the forefront of a new economic and political system. Rather, Muhammad called for a *return* to certain Arabic values. For example, looking after the interests of the weaker members of society instead of oppressing them was linked with the Arabic notion of it being the 'honourable' thing to do. Muhammad was a warner *(nabi)* against the social changes that were occurring: the growth of certain

clans at the expense of the weaker groups and the decline of the communal spirit *(muruwah)* leading to a form of *anomie*. Whatever 'ideology of Islam' that could be perceived by Muslims during Muhammad's lifetime would not realistically have had a profound effect in changing economic and political institutions.

"Muhammad did not establish a state, nor did he unite the Arabs. He took over an existing established regime and modified it, introducing as few changes as possible."[1]

According to much of Sunni tradition, Muhammad did not specify a successor to him as leader, and in true Arab tradition the doors were left open for a new leader to emerge. This was a dangerous thing to do, remembering that the pre-Islamic network of authority in Medina and elsewhere was still the underlying force, merely supplemented by a nascent supra-tribal authority. The need to find a successor to Muhammad on the very day of his death reflects the fragility of this network, and that a natural successor was not evident.

Yet, Muhammad did create a new dynamic order out of the bickering of the various tribes. This order, however lacking in detail, rested upon the commands of Allah, and the sayings of Muhammad. An ideology had been established that was to grow and strengthen. Belief in the truth of the Prophet's revelations was antecedent to the results it engendered in the world: the Islamic conquests were essentially a result of this new religious faith, and highlight the success of the faith. It was, "a remarkable testament to the power of human action mobilised by ideological commitment."[2]

However, as Malise Ruthven states,

"If the plan was divine, its execution was part of human history. If the blueprint was perfect, the material required to make it real and durable was human and therefore flawed. If the Islamic ideal was universal, and therefore consonant with the natural order of divine creation, Muslim society was subject, like all other human societies, to the conditioning of a particular time and circumstance. The problem of finding a balance between the ideal and real, the perfection of Islam

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[1]Shaban (1971) p.15.
[2] Donner (1982) p. 9

and the human and material facts of life, became the stuff of Islamic history from the Prophet's time down to the present."[1]

Quite likely as response to the Egyptian claims to the caliphate in the wake of the elimination of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924, the highly controversial Muslim legal scholar, 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq (Egypt, 1888-1966) also argued that Islam does not specify any particular form of government. Al-Raziq upheld the view that Muhammad never made any claims other than that of Messenger; he was not after, and nor did he attain, kingship or government. Al-Raziq warns his readers not to confuse the role of the Messenger with that of the political ruler:

"The Messenger's trusteeship over his people is a spiritual trusteeship whose origin is faith from the heart, and the heart's true submission followed by the submission of the body. On the other hand, the trusteeship of the ruler is a material one. It depends on subduing bodies without any connection to the heart...the former is divine, the latter is human. The former is a religious leadership, the latter a political one – and there is much distance between politics and religion."[2]

Al-Raziq rightly acknowledges that Muhammad did form an *umma* and was much more than merely a religious leader in the sense of an imam, for he certainly established the foundations for a new group, and that he was its "master" or "manager"[3]; however, al-Raziq is concerned with applying the terms 'king' or 'caliph' to this position because of its connotations with, for example, European forms of kingship. Al-Raziq insists that it was a religious unity, rather than a political one, and that these two things are distinct. By making a series of references to the Qur'an[4], al-Raziq aims to show that the role of Muhammad was not that of a 'subduer' or a 'dominator', and that the Prophet had no right to force people to become believers. Muhammad was but a Messenger, preceded by other Messengers, and that his only commission was to deliver the Message to his people, but not to force them to believe it or to act as 'warden' over them:

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[1] Ruthven (1991) p. 98
[2] al-Raziq (1925), p.31
[3] *ibid.* p.32
[4] For example, 17:54; 10:108; 6:66; 4:80; 39:41, etc.

"...it is not only the Qur'an which prohibits us from thinking that the Prophet, peace be upon him, was calling upon us, along with his religious Message, to found a political state. Nor is it only the *sunna* which also prohibits us from doing so. Rather, along with the Book and the *sunna* comes the wisdom of reason and what the meaning of the Message and its nature reveal. For the trusteeship of Muhammad, peace be upon him, over the believers is the trusteeship of the Message, untainted by anything that has to do with government. Away with it, for there was no government, no state, and nothing to the tendencies to politics, nor of the aims of kings and commanders."[1]

Having said that, Bamyeh does raise the important issue of the extent to which the authority of prophecy can be 'used' to one's advantage. Prophecy does, of course, have its roots in the Qur'an. Throughout the Qur'an, the ancient prophets are perceived as the founding fathers of civilised society. By making links with the Abrahamic tradition, Muhammad is able to create a 'royal family' for which he is the natural heir and would also provide him with greater legitimacy to rule. For example, al-Tabari relates an episode when Muhammad recalls being taken by the archangels Gabriel and Michael to see his "fathers" (Adam and Abraham) who reside in the first and seventh heavens respectively. Muhammad, in the other heavens, also encountered his "brothers" Jehova, Jesus, Idris, Aaron, Moses, and Joseph.[2] The prophets are presented as brothers of one family, with Allah portrayed as a merciful, though vengeful, parental character. These brothers all share a destiny of relaying the same message of God, although the success of passing on this message is due to the fault of the followers, rather than the prophets themselves. As has been emphasised throughout this thesis, Muhammad was not bringing anything new, but *renewing* a forgotten tradition and, by being the 'seal of the prophets', ensuring that, this time, the message will not be diluted or distorted. In al-Tabari's account, Ishmael, the "father of the Arabs", and Abraham, both clearly despise the fact that the Arabs have forgotten their anti-pagan tradition. In this way, the integrity of the prophets is maintained, while the fallibility falls clearly upon the followers.

The role of prophethood, therefore, is not to introduce new teachings, but to *reclaim* the past, and this role has been a part of the Arabic mindset during

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[1] al-Raziq (1925), p.36
[2] al-Tabari Vol 2, 210-211

Jahiliyyah. This is the only way Muhammad's prophethood can be best explained. In this way, Muhammad resides in the Transhistorical realm, while also partaking in the historical. The importance of the Transhistorical as part of the Islamic paradigm cannot be ignored. Authority, at least at the prophetic level, is seen as hierarchical and 'kingly', containing, as it does, the word of God who, in a very tribal sense, is the patriarch, the loving and feared father. Coupled with the view of resurrection in the 'divine city', this is not some libertarian, egalitarian message being presented here and so sits somewhat uncomfortably with the egalitarian principles of the Bedouin.

It is significant that the Bedouins were the last group to join Islam in Arabia, due to their already-mentioned egalitarian nature. The authority of prophethood, of submission, went against the egalitarianism of the Bedouin and they only submitted to Islam through force of the first caliph, Abu Bakr. Mecca, on the other hand, had a well-established social and economic hierarchy. Although this hierarchy helped to protect Muhammad against reprisals because of his status as a relatively influential Hashemite, this status hardly distinguished Muhammad in other ways. Relatively speaking, Muhammad was no big-shot in Mecca. Therefore, for the first three years, Muhammad preached secretly, acquiring a small band of diverse followers. When Muhammad finally made himself public, his authority was rejected by powerful Meccans. As for the Bedouins who visited Mecca to trade, they showed little interest in Islam, barely respecting abstract theological orders. Some tribes only displayed a positive approach to Muhammad on the condition that they would inherit power. They told Muhammad explicitly that they would not sacrifice their lives for something as trivial as Allah, unless this Allah gave them a privileged status among the Arabs after the victory of Islam.[1]

Muhammad, then, failed to construct a prophetic audience in Mecca or amongst the Bedouins for different reasons: in the case of the former, because his status was not seen as high enough to deserve legitimacy, and in the case of the latter because of their unwillingness to submit to any kind of central command and

[1] al-Tabari Vol 2, 232

would only accept a limited form of authority if there was something in it for them. It helps to see how Medina differed from Mecca; in comparison, Medina was more agricultural and less trade-based. Its main tribes, the Aws, Khazraj, and the Jews, were constantly warring with each other for limited space and resources, and the people generally were less sedentary and closer to nomadic habits than the Meccans. Further, Medina had little attachment to idols and, because of its significant Jewish population, would have been familiar with the concept of an abstract God, as well as the Abrahamic tradition attached to it. Mecca, though for various reasons more responsive to the hegemony of Allah, were less responsive to prophethood authority. In Medina, however, the warring factions were in greater need of a unifying authority

What is most interesting is Muhammad's response upon his conquest of Mecca. Shortly before entering the city, Muhammad announced three categories of people who were immune from reprisals: those who sought refuge in the *haram*, those who sought refuge in their own homes, and those who sought refuge in the house of Abu Sufyan. Curiously, Abu Sufyan was the most prominent leader of the Quraysh and had opposed Muhammad until almost the last minute! Therefore, all the dignitaries of Mecca were safe, and even allowed to continue with their lives as before. One *hadith* tells how when the Meccan notable had just given the key to the *haram* to Muhammad, the Prophet said, "You can surely see now that this key is in my hand, that I can assign it to whomever I want?" The notable, thinking that the key would be handed to a member of Muhammad's army, said, "Then, the glory and might of Quraysh is gone!". However, Muhammad promptly replied with "To the contrary, today [Quraysh's name] is entrenched and glorious!" and handed back the key![1]

The significance of this act for Islamic history is immense. Abu Sufyan, Muhammad's arch-enemy, had a son, Yazid, who became the second governor of Syria who, when he died, was taken over by his other son, Mu'awiya; the same man who was to battle against – and defeat - the fourth caliph, Ali. By preserving the established order of Mecca, Muhammad was handing the reigns of Islam to

[1] Al-Waqidi 837-838

the Quraysh. It is ironic that in the victorious battle of conquest that occurred after the conquest of Mecca, it was usually the *Muhajirun* who were the more forthright than the Quraysh, who remained reluctant fighters, yet reaped the financial benefits.

Roughly a year and a half after the *hijra*, Muhammad instructed all Muslims to face Mecca as their direction of prayers (the *qibla*), having previously been Jerusalem. In both cases, the *qibla* was towards a city, rather than some cosmological or natural focus, which emphasised that Islam was a religion of the city and its representation as a place of order, moral codes, and sanctity. This also reflected an increase in confidence in Islam as a separate identity from, especially, Judaism. The effect that Islam's egalitarian ethos had upon Mecca was minimal, rather – and Muhammad is as much responsible for this as anyone, if not more so – the conservative hierarchy was maintained and, indeed, much strengthened. What was more important was order and competence; perhaps Muhammad was only too aware of the valuable expertise and connections the Quraysh had, so that it would jeopardise the whole Islamic enterprise were he to punish them by relinquishing them of their power. For example, the aim of the injunction of almsgiving was to improve the social welfare of the *umma*. However,

"This redistribution did not, however, entail a nostalgia toward nomadic egalitarianism. Rather, it affirmed that nonspeculative labor legitimated exceptional individual wealth. Thus, even after war proceeds were taxed, Muslim warriors could still monopolize fully four-fifths of the spoils, since in some way they were seen as deserving to enjoy the fruits of their physical labor."[1]

The debate as to whether or not an Islamic state was intended goes back a long way. In respect of this study, what comes across is an image of the importance that Islam gives in terms of homogeneity, order, continuity and a moral code. These factors help a state to flourish. Islam was not 'revolutionary' in respect of imposing a 'new world order' from outside, from some cosmological blueprint, but rather it fitted within an already established system and allowed for the systematisation of what was a less institutional arrangement in city society. The

[1] Bamyeh (1999) p. 252

Qur'an never spelled out any direct proposals on how a state was to be governed, and so rules had to be extrapolated from various prophetic and Qur'anic judgements. This is evident from the confusion over how to choose a successor, resulting in a different method being used after each of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs passed away. It was only after the fourth Caliph, Ali, that it was felt that such a ideologically factionalised and territorially magnified entity that was the Islamic empire, could no longer assent to a single ruler, leading to a forcible takeover by the Umayyad and the resulting hereditary rule of succession. In Mecca, the nobility identified itself with political governance, especially with the election of the third Caliph, Uthman. Interestingly, Nagel[1] sees the election of Uthman as an indication of seeking a compromise between the assertion of the Meccan nobility, and the growing antipathy of the *Mahajirun*, for Uthman was both a member of the Meccan nobility and a *Mahajirun*. It seems, then, that those who were persuaded to become Muslim because of their social standing continually supplemented believers who joined on strictly ideological grounds.

It is too far-fetched to suggest that Muhammad was a democrat; such a conception would have been unthought-of at that time. However, neither was he an autocrat, for the people of that environment would not have allowed him such authority. Rather, Muhammad comes across as a pragmatic man, a great man who was keenly sensitive to the soul of the Arab world. Like all leaders, he had to make compromises, and the consequences of these in history have resulted in the neglect of perhaps some of Muhammad's most dearly-held beliefs. Nonetheless, he was able to galvanise a people into forming a new kind of society.

3. The *Rashidun* and their Legacy

"How the Right-guided Caliphs managed the Islamic State after the passing away of the Holy Prophet is preserved in the books of Hadith, History and Biography which are replete with glittering precedents of that golden era."[2]

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[1] Nagel (1982) p.188
[2] Mawdudi (1967) p. 6

The historic religions all involve the idealisation – or 'spiritualisation' – of events that were originally rooted in the politics of a particular period. The consciousness of the group (like that of the individual) achieves its identity by focusing on certain characteristics and events that retrospectively acquire an archetypal significance. The same can be applied to the 'romanticism' attached to the period from 632 to 661, the 'Patriarchal Caliphate', the time of the first four 'Rightly Guided Caliphs' (*Khalifat-e-Rashidun*). They are seen as ideal Islamic rulers, by and large, who governed an ideal Islamic State. However, just how much authority really rested with the Caliphs? Did they possess as much legitimacy over all spheres of life, specifically the political, as has been suggested by the conventional *Rashidun* accounts?

The term 'Caliph' (or '*Khalif*') has the Arabic meaning of 'come after' or 'come instead of'. Therefore, the Caliph is a form of successor. The origins of the term go back to pre-Islamic Arabia to an inscription dated 543 AD for a kind of viceroy or lieutenant acting for a sovereign.[1] The term occurs twice in the Qur'an, with reference to Adam (2:30) and to David (38:26[2]). Importantly, David certainly was not seen by Muslims as a deputy to some other sovereign, but as a king and prophet in his own right. There were to be no prophets after Muhammad, and so an important symbol of religious authority was lost after his death. The state of the *umma* was extremely fragile at this stage and it could well have broken up again; Mecca reverting back to its *mala* (council of clan leaders) and Medina back to tribal war.

Abu Bakr emerged as the obvious choice: a Quraysh, one of the first converts to Islam and father of Muhammad's wife Aisha. He had been chosen by Muhammad to lead the hajj in 631 and to act as Imam during his final illness. From Bukhari's *Sahih*, Umar is cited as saying, "you [Abu Bakr] are the best amongst us and the most beloved of us all to Allah's Messenger".[3] This remark by Umar, "the best amongst us", does in a succinct way summarise what Arabic

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[1] Margoliouth (1922) pp.322-28
[2] "David, we have made you master (*Khalifa*) in the land. Rule with justice among men..."
[3] Khan (1987) 57.6, pp.144, 158. Also, see Robson (1990), 2,1322 pp.59, 144

authority is all about. It becomes particularly relevant when the *Rashidun* comes to an end and dynastic rule comes into effect.

It might also be said that Abu Bakr was elected partly because he came from a relatively insignificant clan with no pretensions to power; it was a *falta*, an affair concluded with haste and without much reflection to avoid the very real danger of tribal conflict and, according to Moojan Momen[1], to put down any prestige for the Prophet's house of Hashim. According to Shaban, Abu Bakr's status of *Khalifat Rasul Allah* was not one of particularly great power: Not only was his secular authority limited, but also his religious authority was much more circumscribed than Muhammad's. At the beginning of his reign he was only a part-time Caliph, who also continued to be a merchant[2]. However, in his short reign of only two years he maintained the Medinan regime, bringing the breakaway tribes back into the fold of the *umma* through the policy of *ridda* (apostasy) wars. But Abu Bakr was by no means an absolute ruler; having to rely on the loyalty of powerful tribal leaders who saw it in their own interests to remain united.

Before his death in 634, Abu Bakr designated Umar b. al-Khattab as his successor in the form of a recommendation, and secured his succession by obtaining pledges of support for Umar from several prominent persons, which, incidentally, is not the same as saying he was approved by the consensus of the whole community of the *umma*. According to Shaban, during the expansion of the Arab empire, Medina exercised virtually no control over the newly-conquered territories, except for the broadest policy decisions for the regime as a whole. Umar had to rely on the voluntary help and advice of other leaders of Medina. Although he had the power to appoint commanders and governors and, at times, give them detailed directions regarding their responsibilities, he had no means of enforcing these directions. Rafiq Zakaria believes that Umar had leanings towards authoritarianism, but he also had, "the sagacity to consult leading Companions on key issues" and "occasionally also called a larger council of Tribal Chiefs to

1Momen (1985) pp.18-19.
2 See Shaban (1971) Vol. 1 p.19.

discuss broader issues and programmes".[1] Umar, in reality, most likely had no more authority than his part-time predecessor. Like any other traditional Arab leader his main function was to advise and persuade, never to dictate.

The conquest of Persia, Syria and Egypt had been accomplished by what was still in effect a very loose coalition of Arab tribes under Quraysh leadership. Interestingly, a number of 'false prophets' appeared on the scene during this time, seeking to supersede other tribal allegiances in a similar manner to Muhammad. The doctrine that Muhammad was the seal of the prophets – only broadly hinted at in the Qur'an – may well have become more established during the reign of Umar so as to certify the 'false prophets' as frauds.

Umar's original title was 'Caliph to the Caliph of the Prophet'; a rather cumbersome title which was replaced with the shorter *'Amir al-Mu'minin'* Although *'amir'* can be variously translated as 'prince', 'commander', 'leader of the blind', 'husband', 'adviser', or 'counsellor', Shaban argues that the latter title of 'counsellor' is the most appropriate in this case. *'Mu'minin'* is best translated as 'believers' rather than 'submitters' (see Chapter Four). As has been argued in Chapter Five many of the fiercely independent tribes would have been unwilling to accept a title that implies submission.

By the time Umar was assassinated the empire was growing too quickly for control to be tightly knit; the tribesmen were still strongly independent and the governors largely uncontrollable. A council of six men were appointed to decide the leadership after the death of Umar, which is hardly representative of the whole community. In fact, all six men were Quraysh. The most commonly quoted Traditions stated that the result of the deliberations of this council was that Ali b. Abi Talib was offered the Caliphate on the condition that he should rule in accordance with the Qur'an, the *sunna* of the Prophet, and the precedents established by the first two Caliphs. The fact that Ali refused suggests that he had a different conception of authority from that of the first two Caliphs. In more contemporary historical accounts, as well as in Shi'ite tradition, Ali was a strong

[1] Zakaria (1988) p.52

proponent of enhancing the power of the Caliph and, for that reason, was considered unacceptable: the position instead going to the 'safe' Uthman b. Affan. The election of Uthman, an Umayyad, may well have finally confirmed Ali's suspicions that the Quraysh were becoming too worldly and 'selling out'.

But Uthman was criticised heavily due to such actions as replacing governors with his own relatives and claiming a larger share of the booty; and also by issuing an 'authorised version' of the Qur'an! This might seem a sensible action, considering the situation of the time with differing versions and much debate over the Qur'an's authority, but the fact that it raised the issue of the authority of the *amir* to propagate one version provides evidence that the *amir* was not perceived by many as having such religious power.

According to Shaban, by the assassination of Uthman, Islamic authority was nothing more than the political authority of the Umayyad family, led by its most able member, Mu'awiya; the Governor of Syria. It is curious that Ali should be appointed almost immediately after the assassination of Uthman without consultation. It seems that two surviving members of the original six of the consultation persuaded Ali to be Caliph as only he could "save the Caliphate from disintegration."[1]

Ali was much more extreme than Uthman when it came to asserting the religious authority of the *Amir al-Mu'minin*, which contributed to his semi-divine status amongst the Shi'a. Although maintaining a brief, fragile coalition he was assassinated in Kufa in 661, and with the rise to power of Mu'awiya, any claims to supreme religious authority were scrupulously avoided. The power house moved from Medina to Syria and there followed a period of cautious government and a series of civil wars within a rapidly expanding empire. Rulers were practical, but hardly concerned with rectifying the religious with the temporal.

The power of myth-making is so striking here, for it is quite remarkable that this period whereby three of the Caliphs were assassinated – two of them by fellow-

[1] Zakaria (1988) p.56

Muslims – and there was almost unremitting civil war and violence should be seen as part of the Golden Age Narrative. In tracing the history of the *Rashidun*, there is little to support the belief that this period was, in Mawdudi's terms, a "golden era". Rather the period is replete with intrigue and power struggles left by the vacuum created by the Prophet. However, this did not prevent the cultism of the *Rashidun*:

"The four patriarchal Caliphs were all men who had been close to the Prophet, who had been in daily contact with him and had assimilated something of his remarkable personality."[1]

3.1 The Mythology of the *Rashidun*: From Historical to Transhistorical

If the Caliphs did not, historically speaking, possess the kind of authority that has been mythologized within the Golden Age Narrative, the question arises how this mythology came about. How, then, did this develop into the paradigm of the perfect ruler that brings together the religious and secular under one united *umma*? To help answer this question the psychological insights of Nietzsche are helpful. It will be recalled that Nietzsche condemns the culture that implants the unobtainable Platonic Ideal.[2] What *motivates* a culture to do this is the attempt to ensure its own survival: it fashions the Will to Power into a fiction, but then goes one step further by objectifying this fiction, by idolising it. This is why Nietzsche says that he is "dynamite", that what he presents is "philosophy with a hammer" to shatter these idols. In Islam, the need for survival stems from two dynasties: the Umayyad and the Abbasid. By idolising the Rashidun and, more specifically, the role of the Caliph, it is hoped that their own legitimacy will be enhanced.

The *Rashidun* have become mythologized as possessing an element, at least, of the charisma that Muhammad possessed. By being privy to the Prophet's innermost thoughts, they were regarded as both privileged and possessing the power and prestige that was attached to Muhammad. Like all great figures, after

[1] Ruthven (1991) p.97
[2] See especially Chapter 2, Section 3 of this thesis

death the cult of personality develops even stronger, so that those who in any way knew him were sought after. The conflicts that the Rightly Guided Caliphs fought out were seen symbolically as conflicts of idealism versus pragmatism, of the desire for the Absolute, the Transhistorical in opposition to the 'mundane', the Historical. Who were the idealists and who were the mundane depends upon your point of view. From the point of view of the Umayyad, their 'Ideal' was the portrayal of Muhammad as an absolute ruler over both religion and the secular. From the point of view of the Shi'a, their Ideal was the same but the difference lay in that the latter believed this could, and should, be attainable whereas the former did not. From the point of view of the Shi'a it seems that ultimately the idealism of Uthman and Ali was defeated by the power of the Umayyad: That the new Islamic order failed to live up to its ideal and was used as a political instrument by the Umayyad power-base.

Hasan, Ali's elder son, opposed Mu'awiya because he did not believe he was a suitably qualified Muslim to lead. Hasan is recorded as saying, "You do not possess any known merit in religion (*din*), nor have you any trace (*athar*) of Islam in you"[1] Mu'awiya himself did not claim to be more pious than Hasan, but rested legitimacy on his own administrative experience. Authority, therefore, was not seen in Islamic terms, for Mu'awiya did not claim to possess piety: "I have better understanding of politics and also I am much older than you,"[2] was his retort. In which case authority is perceived as related to age and political cunning. Mu'awiya did say that Hasan would succeed after his death. It seems rather fortuitous that Hasan died before Mu'awiya. The story of the consequences – the clash between Yazid and Husayn – are well known.

In terms of defining Islamic authority, the archetype of Husayn and the event of the Karbala Massacre cannot be ignored. The event does much to explain the revolutionary element of Iran and of the Shi'a everywhere. Husayn's supporters would not acknowledge the legitimacy of Yazid as Caliph. One *hadith* states that

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[1] Zakaria (1988) p. 61
[2] *ibid.*, 62

Husayn "was one of those who resembled God's messenger most closely"[1], and Muhammad's love for both Husayn and Hasan is well recorded. In such a circumstance, the suspected poisoning of Hasan by Mu'awiya, and the known killing of Husayn[2] by Yazid certainly helps to explain the resulting separation of the Shi'a. At the same time it tells us much about the essence of Islamic authority. As Bennett rightly points out: "When Yazid succeeded, although he was weak and corrupt, the majority simply accepted that a united *umma* under a bad Caliph was still better than an *umma* rife with internal strife and dissension."[3] In the Weberian sense, the office was now more important than the person who occupied it.[4] This policy of the 'silence of the *ulama*' has been evident throughout much of Sunni history and it is one element that distinguishes it from Shi'a. The important thing is the maintenance of society, regardless of the piety of the ruler. Frequently quoted to defend this policy is, for example, surah 4:59: "Believers, obey God and obey the Apostle and those in authority among you." Note, for example, the well-known al-Tahawi creed:

"We do not approve of the sword against any of the community of Muhammad...We do not approve of going out in [rebellion] against...the administrators of our affairs, even though they act wrongfully towards us...We consider that obedience to them...belongs to obedience to God as something prescribed by God; and we pray for soundness and pardon for them."[5]

Importantly, Crone and Hinds[6] have argued that *Khalifat rasul Allah* was not a common title for the Caliphs of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. In fact, the title was more commonly referred to as *Khalifat Allah* and meant 'deputy of God' – or vicegerent of God – not God's *messenger (rasul)*. Interestingly, the rise of the status of Muhammad as the Perfect Muslim lead to a corresponding decline in the authority of Muslim rulers; simply because their kingship was compared with that of Muhammad's and, mostly, failed to come up to the required standards. Sunni authority can only be seen in terms of how it developed over, say, three

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[1] Robson (1990) 2, p. 1358
[2] It is not just the killing itself, but the whole saga attached to it that is seen as a tragedy to be relived through ritual and drama in contemporary Shi'a society.
[3] Bennett (1998) p. 149
[4] Weber (1965) p.
[5] Watt (1994) p. 53
[6] Crone and Hinds (1986) Chap. 2

hundred years, rather than how it existed during the early Caliphate. In fact, it was not until the reign of Marwan (684-5) that the first known coin identifying Muhammad as *rasul Allah* was struck. In 691, Muhammad and Jesus were both identified as messengers of God in the two long inscriptions on the octagonal arcade of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.[1] The reason for this was not so much as to assert the authority of Muhammad above all other Caliphs, but rather to establish the credentials of Islam over and above all other faiths (especially Christian).[2]

Bernard Lewis[3], it should be noted, believes that the title *Khalifat Allah* was used in a very tentative way; rarely used in official (i.e. not odes of praise by court poets, or in speeches and letters cited in books) contexts. The first to have used the title in official inscriptions was the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (r. 685-705); a man of great imperial ambitions who saw himself as rival to the Christian Roman Emperor in Constantinople. There are also coins for the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun (783-833) who describes himself as *Khalifat Allah*. He also was an ambitious Caliph who attempted to assert authority over religious teachings. Another Abbasid Caliph who adopted the title, al-Nasir (r. 1180-1225) attempted to create Baghdad as a Caliphate Vatican state. Lewis, therefore, would agree with Crone and Hinds that the title *Caliphate Allah* represents something more than mere 'successor' and is, in fact, synonymous with the divine right of monarchy. However, the suggestion here is that it was held in such high esteem, rulers were reluctant to use such pretension.

An important document is a letter written by al-Walid II to the garrison cities concerning the designation of his successors. It is the most detailed document that exists that can be considered the Umayyad theory of state.[4] In this document, al-Walid writes of a salvation history divided into two eras; one of the prophets, and one of the Caliphs. The first era – the prophethood era – began with the very first

[1] Kessler (1970) pp. 4, 8
[2] Crone and Hinds (1986) p.26
[3] Lewis (1988) pp.45,46
[4] The full translation I have referred to is from Crone and Hinds (1986) Appendix 2. It is preserved in the chronicle of al-Tabari and is considered by scholars (for example, Dennett and Nagel) to be authentic.

messenger (which, though not referred to specifically, we may assume would be Adam) to preach the message of Islam. This fits in with the Qur'anic reference to a series of messengers who were spurned by the receivers of the message. It was only with the coming of Muhammad that the message was finally accepted, hence the designation of Muhammad as the final prophet. With the death of Muhammad the era of prophethood came to an end. What followed was the era of the Caliphate: deputies to administer the legacy of His prophets. Specifically, their task was to see to the implementation of "normative practice, decree, restrictive statutes, ordinances and rights" [1]. Much of the document then states the importance of obedience to God's Caliphs: whoever obeys will flourish, and whoever disobeys will be punished in both this world and the next.

What is highly significant in this document is that the caliphs are not perceived as in any way subordinate to the prophets, *even* Muhammad. Rather, both prophets and caliphs are seen as God's agents – both subject to the legacy of Islam – the ultimate Truth. The Prophet's role was to deliver the message of Islam, whereas the caliph's role was to put them it effect. The caliph's comes directly from God, not Muhammad! There is no sense in the document that God has stopped ruling his followers *directly*, or that the Caliphate is some kind of second-rate surrogate for the age of Muhammad:

"Muhammad is still a prophet with a small 'p'. Obviously, he was the prophet most relevant to al-Walid and his subjects, being a successful messenger who worked among Arabs and who created the community of which God had now put al-Walid in charge. But he was still one out of many, and he stood at the end of an era, not at the beginning of one. Messengers belonged to the past: the present had been made over to Caliphs."[2]

Much importance rests with Uthman, considered by the Umayyads as not only their kinsman, but as legitimate ruler (chosen by a *shura*) who was wrongfully killed; therefore giving other Umayyads legitimacy to rule. Authority, in this sense, is perceived as *inherited*. The Umayyads are God's chosen lineage,

[1] Crone and Hinds (1986) p. 120
[2] *ibid*, p.28

beginning with Uthman, with Ali as a 'pretender'.[1] For Umayyad court poets[2] – for example, al-Farazdaq (d. c.730) – it is the caliphs who are central to the faith so far as the present is concerned, not the Prophet of the past. They are considered central for two reasons. Firstly, they are 'the tent pegs of our religion' (*awtad dinina*); they keep the community together and, if they therefore cease to exist, then so does the community. One cannot exist without the other. The poet Jarir (d.728) stated: "Were it not for the Caliph and the Qur'an he recites, people would have no judgement established for them and no communal worship." Three centuries later, the philosopher al-Ghazali also argued that if the Caliphate had come to an end, then all religious institutions would be in a state of suspension and all acts performed under Islamic law would be invalid.[3]

Further, the Caliph not only validates the community, he is also the source of guidance (*huda*), which is a prerequisite of salvation. In this sense, the Caliph is also the imam; the spiritual leader and adviser of the *umma*. Without going into great detail here, Crone and Hinds provide an interesting analysis of the status of the Caliph that provides him with considerable authority within the community: "Like the Pope, the Caliph presided over a religious community outside which no ritual act had any effect."[4] The Caliph was 'God's rope' to mankind: whoever holds fast to the rope is saved, while others lose the path of guidance:

"Sovereignty belongs to God; authority is vested in the Caliph as the vice-regent of the prophet, the messenger of Allah. It is the duty of the Caliph to implement the Shari'a, to defend the faith against heresy, and the faithful against attack, and to ensure their ability to live by the prescription of the Shari'a and thus to attain happiness in this world and in the hereafter."[5]

Poets and myth-makers have presented past caliphs as judges; not unlike that of Hindu kings, for example, who judged in accordance with *dharma*. The

[1] Crone and Hinds (1986) p. 32
[2] Crone and Hinds make much use of court poets for their sources. It must be remembered that these were essentially employed to present their rulers as possessing a magical quality, as well as to slander the enemy. They were the propagandist of their time. Though an invaluable source of information, it must be regarded as unreliable unless supported by more 'official' sources.
[3] Crone and Hinds (1986) p. 33
[4] *ibid* p. 40
[5] Rosenthal (1965) pp. 14, 15

difference, however, is that there is a distinction between the rulings of the Hindu king, and that of sacred law (*dharma*): the early Caliphs did not 'implement the *shari'a*' as such, but *made shari'a*. Caliphate verdicts counted as sacred law, as they are found in the *hadith*. Although it may well be the case that most of rulings in the *hadith* that are ascribed to the Umayyad Caliphs were not, in fact, its real authors, what is important is that legal scholars wished to *present* them as such. Therefore, at some point in history the Umayyad Caliphate was perceived as the *source* of holy law, not as adverse to it. The *hadith* portray the caliphs as authorised to make religious law on a par with the *Rashidun*. They were free to make and unmake *sunna* as they wished. Although the sources of caliphate law were the Qur'an, *sunna*, and *ra'y*; it could not be said that it was the *sunna* of the Prophet, nor was it the *ra'y* of legal scholars. In fact, the *sunna* also included that of other prophets and caliphs, which suggest that caliphs perceived themselves as part of a tradition that goes back much further than Muhammad. What is interesting is how the *sunna* was perceived by the caliphs: not as set ideology pertaining to Muhammad, but rather as a more non-specific general 'spirit' that related to the lives of great men; whether it be Muhammad, Solomon, David and so on. What was more important was that these people were perceived as possessing greatness because of their kingship; their semi-divine nature. Thus, what is the guiding force for the Islamic community, centred in the caliph, is not the set ideology of the Golden Age Narrative, but a looser, more flexible, guiding light of tradition that – in theory at least - goes back to Adam, the first Man and the First Muslim. Precedent was still important, of course, but was not restricted to the prophetic-revelatory event of Muhammad.

In fact, the legal rulings of the caliphs could even supersede that of the *Rashidun*. An early *hadith* refers to a ruling of Mu'awiya as deemed better than Umar's.[1] Why this should be the case is the interpretation of *ra'y* as *'ra'y yafuqu ra'y al-rijal'*: of superhuman insight. The caliphs were *mufahhamun*; they were made to understand by God. This concept extends the notion of being rightly-guided (*mahdiyyun*) to that of the Umayyad caliphs, and can be conceived as 'divine inspiration'. In other words, a decision made by a caliph as *ra'y* is the same as

[1] From 'Abd al-Razzaq, cited in Crone and Hind (1986) p. 56

saying the caliph has had guidance from God and, therefore, can supersede decisions made by caliphs and prophets.

According to Crone and Hinds[1], the Abbasids, too, began with the same concept of the caliphate as the Umayyads. Much support for the Abbasid was based upon their claim to truly represent Islam against the unworthy Umayyad occupants of the caliphate, as well as their familial link with the Prophet. Zakaria states:

"The theologians at the time were agreed that an Islamic state had to have a republican character. They held the Umayyads guilty of violating this principle by turning the republic into a monarchy. The Abbasids agreed and assured their subjects that this would be implemented soon. There was, however, no consensus over the means to bring this about and so the monarchical system continued".[2]

Epithets such as *al-hadi, al-mahdi, al-rashid,* and *al-amin*, which court poets had bestowed on the Umayyads, now appeared as titles for the Abbasids. The caliph continued to be indispensable for the attainment of salvation. However, without going into the details here,[3] this position did not last as the status of Muhammad, and thus his *sunna*, increased. By 767 the classical account of the Prophet's life, Ibn Ishaq's *Maghazi*, had been written, while at the same time the classical schools of law were under formation: Abu Hanifa died in 767, Malik in 795, and al-Shafi'i's classical theory was defined during this time. Al-Shafi'i insisted that the whole of the *shari'a* could, in principle, be derived from the Qur'an and, more importantly, he narrowed the concept of the *sunna* so that Prophetic *hadith* alone would be considered as its sole authoritative source. He also redefined *ijma'* as being the consensus of the *entire* Muslim community, and that only strictly analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) was permissible, instead of the existing diversity of doctrine. Al-Shafi'i thus established in systematic form the sources of the law, their order of priority, and their interrelationship. With al-Shafi'i, *sunna* ceased to be something which could be made here and now.

[1] Crone and Hinds (1986)
[2] Zakaria (1988) pp.76,77
[3] See, especially, Crone and Hinds (1986)

The result was a uniform, clearly defined legal system that tied the hands of the caliphs. This past which the Abbasid Caliphs were supposed to imitate consisted of narrowly defined rules which were frequently unhelpful in the running of the state. Hence, the perception of *shari'a* as a negative utopia: it presented an ideal that could not be denied in principle, nor affirmed in reality. The caliphs attempted to maintain authority by stating that they were the ultimate arbiters (in other words, selecting from the works of the scholars such rules as they wished to recognise, and ignoring the rest) not because they were caliphs, but because they were kinsmen of the Prophet (a quality lacked by the Umayyad). However, the scholars studiously avoided paying attention to the Abbasid suggestion that kinsmen of the Prophet should enjoy a favoured position vis-à-vis the *sunna*. The ultimate arbiter was now *ijma'*; although in time this moved from that of the community to that of the scholars (*mujtahidun*) alone.

What is interesting in terms of Islamic authority here is how the Abbasid Caliphate eventually responded to the decline in their status. In particular the career of the already-mentioned Caliph al-Ma'mun, son of Harun al-Rashid. Considered one of the great intellectuals among the Caliphs, he was – before becoming Caliph – governor of the important trade centre of Merv which would have exposed him to the beliefs of Buddhism, Shamanism, Zoroastrianism, and others. Al-Ma'mun sought a restoration of Caliphate authority in Shi'ism, first by designating the eighth imam of the Imami Shi'ites as his successor ('Ali ibn Musa al-Rida), and next to assume for *himself* the prerogatives of this imam! If the Caliph thought that the only way caliphate authority could be preserved was by handing it over to an 'Alid, he evidently also believed that the Abbasids no longer had legitimacy or religious authority. What al-Ma'mun was doing was attempting to restore Umayyad authority by also giving himself the title of *Khalifat Allah*. Interestingly, al-Ma'mun also wrote a letter in similar vein to that of al-Walid's: his view of sacred history dividing into prophet era and caliph era.[1]. Al-Rida died before the Caliph, however, but al-Ma'mun ensured that his body was buried next to the tomb of his father, Harun al-Rasihid, on a site which has now become holy for Shi'ites (called Mashad). After al-Ma'mun, however, the *mihnah* was

[1] See Appendix 4 of Crone and Hinds (1986) for a translation.

abolished, and the attempt to re-assert caliphate authority was generally considered a failure.

Although the Abbasids continued to hold the office of caliph, real power was exercised by the Shi'ite Buyids (932-1075), followed by the Sunni Seljuks (1075-1258). From this point what has been understood as 'caliphate authority' here now transferred to the *ulama*; who now came to be known as imams too. In terms of Sunni Islam, the head of state no longer had religious authority. In 1258, the Abbasid capital of Baghdad fell to Mongol rule and the Abbasid caliphate became extinct. The sultans were effectively independent kings who "came to rule through their military power, but...did not claim to rule in their own right."[1] When the Ottoman Sultan Selim (r.1511-1521) captured Mecca, he seems to have inherited the title of caliph as well, but: "It was technically in abeyance, and if anything it was applied to the Ottoman sultans as a complimentary gesture, *ex officio*, to the best who best embodied Islam's hopes, and whose overweening military success lent credence to the faith."[2] In fact, the title tended to be used more frequently as their temporal authority waned as a way of attempting to legitimise their authority.[3] With Turkey's adoption of a republican government in 1924, the office of caliphate was abolished. This created something of an uproar in the Muslim world. Meetings were held in Cairo and Mecca in 1926 to discuss its restoration, though it was decided the office should "remain in abeyance for the visible future"[4]

Remnants of the title have remained, however, within Sunni Islam. The kings of Morocco still use the title, although hardly recognised internationally. If the Caliphate were to be re-instated, an issue would be how such an individual would be selected. The Abbasids, of course, claimed caliphate authority through the familial. The Fatimids, likewise, claimed the title of caliph through the Prophet's wife Fatimah. As has been correctly pointed out, in theory at least, "Every Muslim head of state who claims the title of caliph has to solve the problem of his

[1] Watt (1968) p. 100
[2] Goodwin (1999) p. 287
[3] *ibid.* p.243
[4] Watt (1968) p.109

descent from the Prophet, to certify a family tree that links him to the Prophet's descendants.'[1] Practice, however, has hardly accorded with theory.

This brief historical account of the caliphate demonstrates Nietzschean history in practice: the drive to survive considered more important that the quest for enhancement. The power to mythologize the past is an aid to survival. It is ironic that by portraying the Prophet as a Perfect Ruler this only results in lowering the esteem that was held for the caliphate because they could not possibly match such perfection. As a result, prophetic status had to be reduced and caliphate status placed upon a pedestal in its stead. However, the damage had been done, and the Prophetic status once again reasserted itself as a way to combat the power of the caliphate. History, then, is a series of competing paradigms that resulted in the eventual extinction of the caliphate as political rulers. The situation as it stands today is that the Prophetic and Rashidun paradigms have become unworkable idealised archetypes, neither of which existed in reality and, should any attempt be made to make a 'return' to such a paradigm, it would be destined to fail.

[1] Mernissi (1993) p.22

Chapter Seven

The Real Threat: Islam's Platonism behind the Mask of Liberalism

1. Mawdudi's Theo-Democracy

The threat to Islam does not come from the West, nor from secularisation. It comes internally, from its own perception of itself. By creating a Transhistorical Islam, a vision of Islam as pure, pristine and all-encompassing, an ideological wall is formed which can only be broken down from the inside. We have seen how a number of Muslim scholars are beginning to call for an 'Islamic Reformation', of the need to realise that the Transhistorical is damaging, impractical and ultimately 'un-Islamic'. For Nietzsche, the problem of Christianity is that it was 'Platonism for the masses', yet this accusation can also be made against the way Islam is starting to present itself to the world and to itself. Islam is killing its own God and, as a consequence, will be forced to either remain an enemy to secularisation, leading to greater fundamentalism, or will be 'secularised' so that it ceases to have any identity or life-enhancing philosophy of its own.

Muhammad Iqbal, as has already been mentioned, employed Nietzsche's philosophy in conceiving Muhammad as an *Übermensch*, as a paradigm of life-affirmation. It is ironic, therefore, that the colleague who, together with Iqbal, established the *Dar al-Islam* (an organisation designed to train scholars in Islamic law) in Pakistan, Mawlana Mawdudi, is typical of those recent scholars who have only reinforced the image of a Pristine Islam, while proclaiming their philosophy to be enlightened.

Mawdudi considered an Islamic form of government to be a moral imperative; it is the system by which the laws of God are given form. He appeals to the primary

source, the Qur'an, to support his thesis. Mawdudi has, like a series of other proponents of an Islamic state, extrapolated specific verses from the Qur'an and interpreted them as supporting his theses. For example he quotes *sura* 3;159: "Take counsel with them in the conduct of affairs, and when you are resolved, put your trust in God."[1] He uses this to show that a Head of State should engage in mutual consultation. However, the verse is making reference to the activities of the Prophet, and not Heads of State in general. Can this specific reference be extrapolated to apply to all Heads of State or proclaim them to be guardians of Islam? More pointedly, as this thesis has demonstrated, there is no reason to believe that Muhammad was a Head of State in any sense the term can be understood today. Mawdudi goes on to say that the Head of State can exercise his "veto", whether or not those he consults reach a unanimous or even majority verdict. This conclusion is based, not on the Qur'an or even *hadith*, but on the "conventions of the Caliphs and the judgements of the eminent jurists of Islam."[2] The Qur'an itself does not give such excessive authority to a temporal leader.

Mawdudi also makes reference to the Qur'an to point out its emphasis on the state as having "coercive power" to enforce morality, quoting *sura* 57:25: "We have sent Our apostles with veritable signs, and through them have brought down scriptures and the scales of justice, so that men might conduct themselves with fairness."[3] However, the reference to 'men' in this *sura* need not imply 'state'. Further along, Mawdudi quotes *sura* 22:41: "God is powerful and mighty: He will assuredly help those who, once made masters in the land, will attend to their prayers and render the alms levy, enjoin justice and forbid evil."[4] The "masters of the land" is interpreted by Mawdudi as 'the state', although one might equally speculate that it suggests the common Qur'anic theme of 'guardianship' of their environment, and that the faithful, given such a position (vicegerency), should maintain their faith; whether they be Caliphs, Imams, tradesmen, or the 'common man'. Man, by 'being Islam' is the 'priest on earth'.

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[1] 3: 159
[2] Mawdudi (1967) p. 42
[3] 57:25
[4] 22:41

Isolating specific references in the Qur'an and interpreting it according to one's own ideology can result in the loss of the wholeness and essential message of the Qur'an and result in the kind of stagnant dogmatism Nietzsche criticised Christianity for. It also ignores the hermeneutic approach that can be adopted towards the Qur'an. 'Sovereignty', defined as the highest unlimited power, rests with Allah. Therefore, when Mawdudi states that "sovereignty belongs only to God. He is the lawgiver. Any person, even a prophet, is not entitled to issue orders or withdraw the orders [of God]"[1], then no legislation in a state can be passed without first reference to God. Of course, this raises crucial problems; not least of which is that God does not personally intervene in the everyday complexities of modern-day living and the Qur'an is not comprehensive enough to provide detailed legislation however expert one might be in the symbolic and hermeneutic interpretation of the Qur'an.

Mawdudi attempts to justify the Pure Islamic state by referring to the Qur'an as a legitimate legal code of political conduct. But such sovereignty alone would not only be impractical in today's complex society - for the Qur'an is, as shown, limited in its political expression - but also Mawdudi's interpretation does not seem to hold up to scrutiny. Mawdudi frequently adopts an atomistic, un-integrated approach which does not take account of social conditions existing today. Qur'anic significance rests upon the reader's ability to deduce general principles to Qur'anic solutions to rulings upon specific and concrete historical issues. As Fazlur Rahman rightly points out:

"In building any genuine and viable Islamic set of laws and institutions, there has to be a twofold movement: First one must move from the concrete case treatments of the Qur'an - taking the necessary and relevant social conditions of that time into account - to the general principles upon which the entire teaching converges. Second, from this general level there must be a movement back to specific legislation, taking into account the necessary and relevant social conditions now obtaining."[2]

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[1] Mawdudi (1969) p. 127
[2] Rahman (1982) p. 20

The Qur'an's "general principles", such as justice, equality, freedom of expression, freedom of conscience and conviction, freedom of association, and so on[1], reflect the Qur'an's timelessness and relevance in the quest for basic human rights and are principles that are, or should be, upheld in any society. Note the following remarks, made back in 1883, by the Indian scholar Chiragh Ali:

"The Koran does not profess to teach a social and political law...The more important civil and political institutions of the Muhammadan law, Common Law based on the Koran are mere inferences and deductions from a single word or an isolated sentence...In short the Koran does not interfere in political questions, nor does it lay down specific rules of conduct in the Civil law. What it teaches is a revelation of certain doctrines of religion and certain rules of morality"[2]

Mawdudi refers to the sunna of the Prophet as the second source of guidance. By making reference to Muhammad's life, Mawdudi proclaims that we are presented with the ideal Head of State from which Man can attain the *Minhaj al-Nubuwah* ('Caliphate on the Prophetic Pattern'). Mawdudi's view of history – of the perpetual struggle between Islam and *Jahiliyya* – reflects his perception of Muhammad as victor over *Jahiliyya* rather than a product of it. Mawdudi sees Muhammad as the founder of a new community grounded in an ideological movement, engaged in bringing about social change in the direction of the Will of God. The Prophet, it is argued, constructed a new society and a new state; the ideal pattern of socio-political order under Muhammad as its champion and statesman: this is the order that Muslims should actualise in their lives.

Mawdudi looks to the Prophet as the ideal statesman and Medina as the ideal Islamic State; an age of unity between the religious and the secular with Muhammad as its Head. As this thesis has shown, however, such a conception goes against any study of Muhammad within the context of the historical and social situation at that time. The arrival of Islam did not create new systems, institutions, ideas and theories out of nothing; rather they presented a new

[1] Note, I am quoting these rights from Mawdudi's own text, *Human Rights in Islam* - which generally is quite an admirable attempt at outlining Islamic general principles that, unfortunately, are marred by Mawdudi's insistence on restricting these principles to specifics that are in direct contradiction to the principles themselves.
[2] Ahmad and von Grunebaum (1970) pp. 49-52

approach to existing systems. In the development of civilisations, intellectual disciplines and schools of thought a general pattern can be perceived as a progress from a particular world-view to a distinct intellectual school of thought, and only then to achieve a new mode of social organisation. At the time of the Prophet, authoritarian structures already existed; a corpus of ideas on justice, subjugation, economics and so on that allowed society to function. Any 'world-view', or 'ideology of Islam', as Mawdudi puts it, that Muhammad possessed would have been at its nascent stage; containing the quintessence of Islamic spirituality that, at its maximum, would have allowed a differing approach or attitude to the institutional and organisational activities that were already being engaged in at that time:

"Muhammad did not establish a state, nor did he unite the Arabs. He took over an existing established regime and modified it, introducing as few changes as possible."[1]

Mawdudi projects his view of Islamic history beyond Muhammad to the *Khalifat-e-Rashidun* as examples of men adhering to the principles of *Minhaj al-Nubuwah*. The third source of guidance for the Islamic state can be found, therefore, amongst the precedents of the first four Caliphs. For Mawdudi, not only was this a time of geographical expansion, but it also coincided with the supremacy and enlightened authority of the *Rashidun*. In this rapid growth, the unity of the umma was maintained; religion and politics worked hand in hand. In the pursuance of the Islamic state, Mawdudi believes much can be gained by referring to the *hadith* on such points as the decisions and policies of these Caliphs. Again, as this thesis has shown, such a conception of the *Rashidun* is idealised to say the least. In tracing the history of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, there is little to support Mawdudi's thesis of containing a series of "glittering precedents" and a "golden era". Rather the period is replete with intrigue and power struggles left by the vacuum created by the death of the Prophet.

Concerning the actual authority of the supreme head, Mawdudi remarks:

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[1] Shaban (1976) p. 15

"The position of a man who is selected to conduct the affairs of the state is no more than this: that all Muslims delegate their caliphate to him for administrative purposes. He is answerable to God on the one hand and on the other to his fellow 'caliphs' who have delegated their authority to him."[1]

At this point one needs to be clear what Mawdudi understands by the term "caliph"; as he seems to be suggesting that all Muslims are caliphs and that, therefore, we are talking of a 'democracy' (in the sense that all Muslims have equal representation in the affairs of state). Yet, at the same time, one is bound by the laws of God, which implies a theocracy:

"Islamic theocracy is not controlled by a special religious group of people but by ordinary Muslims. They run it according to the Qur'an and *Sunna*. And if I am allowed to coin a new word, I would call it 'theo-democracy'. It would grant limited popular sovereignty to Muslims under the paramount sovereignty of God. In this [state], the executive and the legislature would be formed in consultation with the Muslims. Only Muslims would have the right to remove them. Administrative and other issues, regarding which there are no clear orders in the *Shari'ah*, would be settled only with the consensus of Muslims. If the law of God needs interpretation no special group or race but all those Muslims would be entitled to interpret (*ijtihad*) *who have achieved the capability of interpretation."*[2] [my emphasis]

At first impression, the "democratic principles" of consultation does indeed suggest democracy, but when one digs a little deeper there are serious limitations placed on the citizen. Apart from the fact that no mention is made here of non-Muslims[3], Mawdudi's reference to "only Muslims" would not include women either[4]. Mawdudi then proceeds to allocate powers of *ijtihad* to those Muslims "who have achieved the capability of interpretation." According to Mawdudi's

[1] Mawdudi (1980) p. 151
[2] Mawdudi (1969) p. 130
[3] In Mawdudi's state, with its basis of an ideology, there are serious repercussions for those members of the state who do not reflect that ideology. A Muslim can lead a believer's life only in an Islamic state and society, for "Who so judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are disbelievers." (5:44). Man-made judgements are, therefore, to be regarded with suspicion. As Mawdudi has stated, where man-made judgements have to be made then they should at least be made by the most pious of Muslims. It follows from this that the non-Muslim could not possibly hope to obtain any significant position of power in Mawdudi's state.
[4] "Some nations have given woman the position of governor over man. But no instance is found of a nation that raised its womanhood to such a status and then attained any high position on the ladder of progress and civilisation. History does not present the record of any nation which made woman the ruler of its affairs, and won honour and glory, or performed a work of distinction." – Mawdudi (1986) p. 111

own calculations[1], the percentage of Muslims with any true knowledge of Islam is not more than .001 percent! Thus, although he makes allowance for *ijtihad*, this authority would be limited to a very small minority indeed.

Mawdudi's "limited popular sovereignty" does not imply democracy in the sense of power to the masses, despite his theo-democracy claims, stating that when,

"laws are made with the will of the people, experience has shown that the common people themselves cannot understand their interests. It is a natural weakness of human beings that in most matters relating to their life they consider some aspects of the matter and overlook others; generally their judgement is one-sided."[2]

This inability to trust the "common people" in any matters of judgement - a theme that runs throughout Mawdudi's philosophy - does not bode well for the 'democracy' aspect of his "theo-democracy". Although all believers are repositories of the Caliphate, the strong suspicion one has is that Mawdudi would fail most Muslims in any test of piety.

Regarding those few who are chosen to be God's representatives, Mawdudi quotes *sura* 24:55:

"Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will assuredly make them to succeed (the present rulers) and grant them vicegerency in the land just as He made those before them to succeed (others)."[3]

Mawdudi concludes from this that the term 'vicegerency' refers to state-rule; that is, sovereignty belonging to God alone; which is a somewhat tenuous link as the *sura* has no overt political reference. But this promise of vicegerency is more commonly interpreted as a reference to the Earth, not to the State, and this interpretation is in accordance with the general principles that the Qur'an upholds. Also, the prestige that one can achieve through righteous deeds is generally perceived in a social sense; the authority one gains through one's honesty, justice

[1] Mawdudi (1983) p.140
[2] Mawdudi (1969) p. 132
[3] 24:55

and piety is, in itself, an earned position of respect and a social acknowledgement of that person's qualities. This is not synonymous with political power.

Mawdudi's distrust of the "common people" and his concern with maintaining a status quo is evident. He envisions the Caliph as someone who can be entirely trusted. Like Plato's Philosopher-King, there is no reason to suppose that power corrupts or that the ruler, *knowing* what is good, could possibly do other than what is good. It is worthwhile quoting Mawdudi at some length of his vision of what the Caliph once was:

"He was not just the president of the state but the prime minister as well. He attended the parliament himself, presided over its meeting and fully participated in its debates. He was responsible for the affairs of his government and accounted for his personal affairs as well. He had neither an official party nor an opposition party; the entire parliament acted as his party as long as he followed the right path, and the whole parliament acted as the opposition party if he followed the wrong path. Each member was free to oppose or support his decisions; even his own ministers used to oppose him in the parliament. Nevertheless, the president and his cabinet got along very well; no one ever resigned from his office. The calipha was answerable not only to the parliament, but to the entire *qaum* [nation] for all his activities, even concerning his private life. He faced the public five times a day in the mosque and addressed them at Friday prayers. People could find him in the streets and *muhallas*, and anybody could stop him to ask for his rights. Not only could the members of parliament question him on prior notice but anyone could ask him questions at public places."[1]

There has never been, so far as can be assessed, a period in history where such a form of government has existed in the Islamic community, and one has to question the viability of Mawdudi's political philosophy in a modern nation-state. Mawdudi himself is forced to conclude that, "It can only become practicable when society has been fully prepared in accordance with the revolutionary principles of Islam."[2] Obviously he is envisioning a society that does not at present exist. Unfortunately, he bases his philosophy on a past that also did not exist and on an erroneous interpretation of Islamic sources.

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[1] Mawdudi (1969) p. 345
[2] *ibid.* p. 346

It should be stressed that the intention here is not to criticise Mawdudi's philosophy alone, but to demonstrate that his Transhistorical view is a prevalent one to this day. It is the view that this thesis has set out to challenge, and a view that certain Muslim scholars are also now prepared to question, despite the high regard that Mawdudi still holds. In Mawdudi's Islamic State, authority - the body to which the power to make and enforce laws is given - would rest with a small number of individuals, acting as representatives of God. This conception of authority is reminiscent of medieval European societies rather than any modern democratic system. Mawdudi's claim that his Islamic society would be a "theo-democracy", therefore, seems to beg the question: where is the democracy?

Mawdudi's outline of the State is authoritarian in the sense that political coercion is required to implement Islamic philosophy throughout all elements of life: "...reforms that Islam wants to introduce cannot be introduced just by preaching. To implement them, political power is needed."[1] Mawdudi has shown throughout his writings a lack of trust in general human will and has, therefore, chosen to exclude it as a weakness and a distraction from his political aims: his objective is not to organise a society on the basis of equity and justice - which would seem entirely 'Islamic' in spirit - but to interpret the sovereignty of God as the submission of the individual will to the coercive power of the state apparatus. As such, Mawdudi has remained ignorant of the contemporary political arena where all political philosophies are necessarily influenced by the international context and the socio-economic conditions that are prevalent at the time. The fact that it may be conceivable to organise a society on a level that would allow individual free will is a concept that Mawdudi distrusts entirely:

"It is obvious that to organise collective life, in all circumstances there is a need for coercive power, which is called the state. No one has ever denied this need except for the anarchists, or communist theory, which contemplates a stage when humanity would not need a collective state. All these are idealistic contemplations which cannot be supported by observation and

[1] Mawdudi (1969) p. 57

experience...Human history and the knowledge of human nature show that the establishment of civic life is essentially dependent on a coercive power."[1]

But does not Mawdudi himself come across as somewhat 'idealistic', with little relevance to history or experience? 'State coercion' leaves an unpleasant taste in the mouth; implying, as it does, suppression of free will and difference of opinion. Mawdudi does not leave the reader in any state of optimism:

"If you wish to organize your political and economic life in accordance with the teachings of Islam, then you need not divide yourself into different parties. Only one party, the *Hizb-i-Allah* (the party of God) is sufficient for all these tasks. Why? Because in an Islamic society there is no conflict between capitalists and workers, landlords and peasants, rulers and the ruled."[2]

This is about as 'idealist' as a person can be, and historical experience would incline the reader to feel fear and suspicion rather than positive optimism. For Mawdudi, the State *is din*; it enters all spheres of activity: "Acceptance and submission by the people to a paramount authority are required in the state. This is the meaning of *din* as well."[3]

Such a view of Islam as a monolithic ideology ignores its ability to accept a diversity of cultures and belief systems, and cannot be backed up by an historical account of the development of Islam as it spread throughout the Middle East, Africa, Indonesia and Asia. Although the Prophet was against discrimination on the basis of national, ethnic and racial differences, this is not the same as saying that it is the aim of Islam to eliminate such difference: the *umma* represents unity through diversity. In the past, almost all Muslims lived in intensely community-oriented societies, and so the interests and demands of local authority (the extended family, tribal kinship, and ethnic-linguistic groupings) have had to be accommodated within the vast 'Islamicate' of the *umma*: the fact that it has succeeded in accommodating such differences at least partly helps to explain why it spread so widely and rapidly and was embraced by so many differing cultures.

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[1] Mawdudi (1969) p. 67
[2] *ibid.* p. 47
[3] Mawdudi (1983) p. 123

Reconciliation between the *umma* as monolith and the local community as pluralistic was achieved through the decentralisation of power and a toleration of such difference.[1] Thus, while the *umma* was one and ideally 'united', its diversity was presumed.

Mawdudi reduces such acceptance of differences and pluralism to the one ideology and the one party. In fact, he goes even further by proclaiming the word 'party' to be synonymous with 'nation':

"The word that the Qur'an has used for the community of Muslims is *hizb*, which means party...and the basis of the nation is race and descent, and the basis of a party is its programme and its principles...therefore, Muslims in reality are not a nation but a party."[2]

Mawdudi's criticism of nationalism rests on the rather simplistic assumption that it rests on race and descent which, of course, is not necessarily the case; other factors apart from common race or common descent may go together to make a nation. Mawdudi's Islamic state, therefore, would not have national boundaries, but would be the seed of a universal revolution: the universal *umma* that would submerge all differences, all boundaries, all beliefs into the monolith. It would not be a federation of nations - even if the boundaries of those nations have evolved due to ethnographic reasons - but one great mass; an ideological empire.

2. Ideology versus Human Will

Nietzsche's criticism of past philosophers such as Plato is their attempt to reconstitute human knowledge upon permanent, hopefully immutable foundations. Nietzsche rejected the whole doctrine of the universalizability of the moral law. For him, to legislate meant to legislate for oneself. The 'Thou shalt'

[1] Although it could be argued that the Islamic empire was so large that it did not possess the necessary apparatus to enforce; it *had* to tolerate difference.
[2] Mawdudi (1969) p. 246

is really an 'I will', and ultimately as 'I am', since it is in virtue of my own choices that I am what I am:

"There is little doubt that the 'thou shalt' still speaks to us too, that we too still obey a stern law set over us – and this is the last moral law which can still make itself audible to us...we *men of conscience* who do not want to return to that which is outlived and decayed, to anything 'unworthy of belief', be it called God, virtue, truth, justice, charity; we do not permit ourselves any bridges-of-lies to ancient ideals; we are hostile to every kind of faith and Christianness existing today; hostile to all romanticism and fatherland-worship."[1]

Other Muslim scholars have also supported Mawdudi in his proposition that the goal of Islam must be the Islamic State. Muhammad Asad (formerly Leopold Weiss), in his book *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*[2] states that Islam does imply the establishment of God's Will on Earth. In almost all respects, Asad seems to echo Mawdudi's own philosophy: complete submission to God's sovereignty; obeying the code of life as laid down by the Qur'an and Sunna; social life to be governed according to the Islamic pattern; the state to have ultimate authority; and a rejection of all forms of secularisation. However, he does differ from Mawdudi in one important respect in that laws of earlier Muslim scholars - which Mawdudi gives sacred value - can, and indeed must, be continually changed and replaced according to contemporary circumstances. Asad, therefore, recognises the vagaries of time as a determining factor, and that to ignore time would inevitably lead to stagnation. Therefore, according to Asad, every generation has the right to exercise *ijtihad* in areas that are not covered by the Qur'an:

"A rediscovery of the 'open road' of Islam is urgently required at a time like this, when the Muslim world finds itself in the throes of a cultural crisis which we may affirm or deny...Set as we are in the midst of a rapidly changing world, our society, too, is subject to the same inexorable law of change."[3]

Asad's reference to the 'open road' of Islam is interesting, and is a reference to the Qur'an, *sura* 5:48, "For every one of you We have ordained a Divine Law and an

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[1] Nietzsche (1982) Preface
[2] Asad (1961)
[3] *ibid.* pp. 16,17

open road."[1] Obviously, Asad asserts the supremacy of the Qur'an and the Sunna, but places them as the bedrock for change and development. Consequently, the words of the original sources are subject to fresh interpretation according to changes in human perception and attitudes: thus recognising the dynamics of man within his environment; whereas Mawdudi is insistent upon the verdicts of past Muslim judges as being final and absolute to this present day. Asad suggests two approaches to a new programme: firstly, that Islamic law should return to the simplicity of its original and not allow itself to be bogged down by various subjective interpretations of past judges; secondly, an Islamic State - though recognised by Asad as essential - should not be required to fit into the mould of an Islamic state of a previous era.

It is highly unlikely that any modern-day complex society could maintain its laws in any simplistic manner, but at least Asad is prepared to relieve it of dead weight: he is not so attached to the romanticised past as Mawdudi appears to be. The result for Asad would be the establishment of an Islamic government based on broad Islamic principles. Asad admits that each generation may well have different forms of government (for he believes that the Qur'an and Sunna do not prescribe any particular form of government, nor elaborate a constitutional theory), but insists on the basic principle of 'consultation' being adhered to, referring to the Qur'an, *sura* 42:38, "Their [the Muslims] communal business [*amr*] is to be [transacted in] consultation among themselves."[2]

Asad also differs from Mawdudi in proposing the widest possible suffrage for both men and women, leading to a widely-elected assembly. The community is allowed to nominate candidates, and differences of opinion in an elected assembly are within the Islamic code, quoting his own selected *hadith* which Mawdudi chooses to ignore. As differences of opinion are allowed, it follows on from this that people have the right to form political parties too, which Asad also accepts. However, Asad's allowance for differences of opinion only go so far:

[1] 5:48. This is Asad's own translation. Dawood translates it as 'path', whereas Yusuf Ali translates it as 'open way.'
[2] 42:38. 'Consultation' in Dawood translates as 'mutual consent', although in Ali it also translates as 'consultation'.

"One must...frankly admit from the outset that without a certain amount of differentiation between Muslims and non-Muslims there can be no question of our ever having an Islamic state or states in the sense envisaged in Qur'an and Sunna."[1]

Again, here one is confronted by the dilemma of the requirements of an Islamic state and its consequent ideological basis, and the existence of citizens with differing ideologies. Although Asad goes a little further than Mawdudi in allowing non-Muslims to seek employment in the state service and even the army, it is supposed that differences of opinion would be a principle that would have a very limited application.

An Islamic state, by implication, must still be conditioned by ideology, which would still put non-Muslims at a disadvantage: Asad is not altogether clear as to the full extent of authority for *dhimmis*, but it does raise the question how non-Muslims could possibly be put in a position of implementing Islamic ideology. Divine laws that are contained within the Qur'an and Sunna would, presumably, require implementers who are educated in these systems to codify them into laws. This also, of course, has implications for political parties: how can a party have policies that are in any way opposed to laws contained within the Qur'an and Sunna?

Another scholar who fits within the Mawdudi mould is Calipha Abdul Hakim. In his book *Islamic Ideology*[2], he states that, "The highest organisation of society is the state. Islam had to found a state to give to the world in practical form the ideals of statehood."[3] However, he also gives more allowance for human will than Mawdudi is prepared to do, stating that the laws of Islam amount to only around ten pages of the Qur'an and that, otherwise, Muslims are free to legislate as needs arise, so long as it is within the spirit of Islam, i.e. principles of equity and justice[4]. This appears to be an even broader approach to Islam with its

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[1] Asad (1961) p. 40
[2] Hakim (1974)
[3] *ibid.* p. 195
[4] *ibid.* p. 221

emphasis on the spirit of Islam rather than any interpretation of specific laws. Even the laws in the Qur'an are not to be taken too literally, but merely to offer broad guidelines as to how to create a just state. On this point, Hakim appears more progressive, and certain principles that he proposes - the same fundamental rights for men and women and equal civil rights for Muslims and non-Muslims - are noble. However, rather like Mawdudi's grand principles, closer scrutiny betrays the same dilemma of ideology versus free will.

Although Hakim speaks of equal civil rights, as ideology is still the basis of the state he also makes a distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims: the *dhimmis* can hold "key posts"[1], but how influential these would be is debatable: they still have to pay the protection tax (*jizya*) and, although Hakim is quite praising of fellow People of the Book, he is equally condemning of polytheism and atheism, for which there would be no place in Hakim's Islamic State.

Hakim also displays dogmatism in giving the right to legislate to a select group of 'experts': "The learned men in the state should continue to reinterpret and revise the laws; they shall not be changed merely by the vote of the ignorant masses creating brute majorities."[2] This certainly does not augur well for any form of democratic principles being applied.

What comes across is the essential problem of equating Islam as an absolute ideology with the will of the individual. This may well have not been a problem in previous eras, but what accompanies secularisation is a greater awareness of the self, of a self-evaluating 'I' that has emerged within an environment that is constantly battling against the will of the 'I' to assert itself. Nietzsche believed that the concept of individuality, indeed of individuals *as such*, is a late concept. As consciousness, as language, has a social origin and function, individuals achieve consciousness only of the ideas which are common to all others in that society. As an individual could not survive without a society, then it was not possible to achieve a sense of one's self as an independent unit. Nietzsche

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[1] Hakim (1974) p. 238
[2] *ibid.* p. 208

believes that it is only fairly recently in the evolution of society that individuals begin to think of themselves as individual selves, separate from the herd:

"The herd would have been made up of individuals, but they could not have been aware of themselves as such, and deviations from the norm would simply have perished, cast out like alien bodies, through inability to express their wants. Within each herd there would be a profound and virtually irresistible force making for homogeneity...there could have been differences between herds, because each would have worked out its language against the conditions that made for its survival; and as these vary, so do herds."[1]

The result is homogeneity of values, traditions and beliefs within the herd, but also heterogeneity *between* the herds. However, the effect of modernity has made the herd more aware of this heterogeneity. This answers the question of how individuals can possibly hope to become aware that they are individuals and that there are other possibilities; simply because as the world gets smaller there is a greater awareness of other possibilities. Throughout history, there have been 'greater men' – whether it be Jesus or Muhammad – but these are very rare indeed, and are more liable to suffer death, madness, banishment, or some other fate:

"Zarathustra has seen many lands and many peoples: thus he has discovered the good and evil of many peoples. Zarathustra has found no greater power on earth than good and evil.

No people could live without evaluating; but if it wishes to maintain itself it must not evaluate as its neighbour evaluates.

Much that seemed good to one people seemed shame and disgrace to another: thus I found. I found much that was called evil in one place was in another decked with purple honours...

...A table of values hangs over every people..."[2]

This brings us full circle: in an ever-increasingly small world we can treat Islam and the West as 'other', as possessing opposing values and attempt to maintain, or rather enforce, this through coercive power and ideology, through keeping as much distance as possible between the herds, or search for common values and look to that which is more life-enhancing rather than merely a result of the need to maintain itself as it is. This is where the *Übermensch* comes in, to struggle

[1] Danto (1980) p. 142
[2] Nietzsche (1969) p. 84

against the stagnant herd. However, this requires "enormous counterforces in order to thwart this natural, all-too-natural *progressus in simile*, the further development of humans who are similar, ordinary, average, herd-like – common!"[1]

Another option has been suggested by S. M. Zafar in *Awam, Parliament, Islam*[2] which basically states that Islam does not, in fact, provide or prescribe any concept of the state whatsoever: rather the domain of politics has been left for the community to partake in as it will; although it is hoped that, as good Muslims, they would apply the Islamic spirit of equality and justice to political matters as they would with all matters. By omission of much in the way of political reference in the Qur'an, Zafar believes this has therefore been left to man's own intelligence: God, therefore, has put faith in Man in this particular case; whereas Mawdudi would not countenance the possibility that Man - with few exceptions - can be trusted.

Thus, we are down to the very bare bones of Islam; its basic rules and principles, no prescribing or enforcing. Man is free to adopt any state system he so wishes provided it is within these basic principles. The only principle on statecraft given in Islam is about government being conducted on the basis of consultation; which Zafar interprets as accountability, free legislation and democracy.[3] Zafar accepts the passage of time and the movement of history as an integral part of any belief system. Mawdudi romanticises about the Medinan era as the highest level of Islamic achievement; a golden age of spiritual and political perfection that Man must return to. However, Zafar - though in agreement that the height of spirituality was achieved with Muhammad - believes that political development has come a long way since Medina and should not be cast aside as irrelevant and regressive. Modern political forms such as territorial nationalism, political parties, democratic elections, and so on are not contrary to the spirit of Islam, but are different expressions of its essence of consultation.

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[1] Nietzsche (1998) Section 268
[2] Zafar (1980)
[3] Zafar (1980) p. 317

Although Zafar's 'progress' comes to a halt with respect to laws that are given in incontrovertible terms in the Qur'an[1] he does raise the important point that, as Allah has not provided detailed instructions as to how to constitute a State, it is left to human will to do this. Zafar's acceptance of Time and its conflict with ideology is also emphasised in the work by Professor Muhammad Usman, *Islam Pakistan Mein*[2]:

"For example, at one stage in history the system of slavery was commonly practised. Islam also accepted it in a mild form. But now the morality of no civilised society can tolerate it. The result is that not only in Europe and America but also in the Muslim world the system of slavery has been abolished. The idea of giving equal status to women is also a product of the 'Spirit of the Time.'"[3]

Usman perhaps goes as far as one can go without divorcing Islam altogether from affairs of the state. He agrees with Zafar that there is no concept in the Qur'an of the idea of an Islamic state, but goes much further by also stating that the principle of consultation does not necessarily refer to such contemporary concepts as parliamentary democracy, for even dictators 'consult'! And so, it follows on from this, that it seems any form of government is acceptable to Islam, whether it be democratic, monarchical or dictatorial. But Usman does not go quite so far in his separation: history shows that monarchy has, in the past, often thrived in Muslim societies and it would seem that it was the acceptable form of government for its time, in the same way as democracy is considered by many to be the contemporary acceptable face of government. However, dictatorship is another matter as - regardless of the form of government - it is at least bound by the Islamic principles of equity and justice: Islam, revealed through its Prophet, has brought mankind to the level where it could absorb the virtues of justice, piety, and bravery for which the Qur'an provides extensive guidance. Therefore, the essence of Islam is not 'dropped', but Usman perceives Islam as flexible to the shifting sands of Time. Consequently, although democracy may well be the current acceptable form of government in the pursuit of Islamic values of justice and equality, it does not imply that it is the final form of government.

[1] Particularly, Qur'anic references to laws of inheritance, which are limited, and criminal offences, which many consider harsh by today's standards.
[2] Usman (1969)
[3] *ibid.* p. 14

We have come a long way from Mawdudi's absolutism, although Islam has not been deserted altogether. The consequences for the state would still be felt, however: As Usman bases his argument on the fact that if there is no clear statement in the Qur'an, then Man is free to act as he will, then it also follows that where there are clear statements they must be binding. Therefore, the progressive liberality of the state would, to a certain degree, still be held back by the dogmatic laws on inheritance, matrimony, and the criminal code. Nonetheless, it appears that we have gone as far as we can along the path towards the secularisation of the Islamic state; there are but fragments of Divine Law remaining. To go any further, and abandon Qur'anic law altogether, would place the state in the Donald Smith category of "polity dominance secularization".[1] Islam would still remain within society on a personal level, but without any legal obligation. Would there, in such a circumstance, be any need for the *ulama*? The *ulama* may well find a role for itself, but within an Islamic tradition that is essentially anti-church the Muslim may well no longer feel the need for a 'priesthood' either. This, indeed, is Reformation talk:

"In a sense Islam is a secular religion...With this philosophy of a religious life, there arises no need for a spiritual guardianship of the people by a priesthood. Therefore, Islam did not create one."[2]

There is not contained in the Qur'an any specific reference to the setting up of an Islamic Government, nor is the Qur'an sufficiently detailed on points of law so as to avoid the need for human intervention. Although the Qur'an does contain certain general principles that may well be applied to circumstance, this is a far cry from specific legislation. Mawdudi's interpretation of the Qur'an attempts to link God's sovereignty to 'state sovereignty'; but this is highly unrealistic and goes against the general theme of Islam that all Muslims are God's vicegerents, not just the select elite. As the Qur'an provides very limited instruction regarding legislation, one must look elsewhere for guidance. Mawdudi's reliance on the Sunna of the Prophet rests on the assumption that Muhammad was the ideal

[1] Smith (1974) p.8. See Chapter 2 of this thesis, p. 41
[2] Qureshi (1972) p. 3, 4

statesman of an ideal state. Although it might be concluded that Muhammad, as the prophet of Islam, attained the highest level of spirituality, his political acumen is another matter. There is no denying his considerable political achievements in at least establishing the seeds of a new political form in the sense of the *umma*, but it must also be realised that it was at its nascent stage and by no means as unified as Mawdudi would have us believe. Muhammad's role was more of an arbiter of disputes, and the chiefs of the other Medinan tribes maintained considerable autonomy. At best, Muhammad was perceived as belonging to the 'Abrahamic tradition' with a vague monotheism and a collection of rituals hardly distinguishable from Jewish or Syrian Christian tradition. The concept of Muhammad as Prophet may well have been a collection of various religious ideas of prophethood which, much later, developed its own distinctiveness. Muhammad's religious authority, therefore, was accepted partly because of political advantage; but Muhammad could hardly have been a Head of State, for Medina could not be described as a 'state' in the modern sense of the word - nor would he have had the authority of a complete moral and spiritual doctrine.

Even if Muhammad *was* an absolute head of state, the fact that Muhammad chose not to select a leader after him implies that there was not to be any divine authority accredited to the new leader (or even, for that matter, that there should be a new leader). It may even be speculated that Muhammad himself did not have the authority, even at the point of death, to choose a successor. None of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, consequently, had anywhere near the authority of the Prophet, and nor did they always appear to have been entirely 'Islamic' in their conduct, especially in the case of Uthman, for whom Mawdudi himself had one or two reservations about. The Transhistorical claim that the conventions of the Rightly Guided Caliphs provide a valuable source for an Islamic State do not hold up to scrutiny, as it paints the era in a golden light that it does not altogether deserve: although certainly a time of military expansion, this was largely out of the hands of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, whose role appeared to be more symbolic as secular authority continued to exist independently of the spiritual.

There is little evidence to suggest that Islam prescribes an Islamic state. A state that wishes to declare itself 'Islamic' could attempt to function at various levels of compromise; from an acceptance of God as sovereign but with varying degrees of delegation in interpreting and applying law to changing circumstances (Asad and Hakim), which would still maintain Islamic ideology and, therefore, still be an Islamic state in the sense that those who are Muslims would have rights as citizens that were more or less equal. Alternatively, the compromise of limiting the state to basic rules and principles, but still maintaining an 'Islamic' character by making reference to the Qur'an and, therefore, recognising religious authority (Zafar and Usman).

In all these cases, the consequences are that the traditional Islamic sources cannot be applied to the Islamic state in any workable manner. This is not an abrogation of Islamic principles, but rather an acceptance that Islam does not prescribe an Islamic state and that politics is best left to those who wish to partake in it, whilst those who choose to worship God - however they may perceive Him - are also free to do so without fear of discrimination or denied salvation by being treated as second-class citizens.

History seems to show that an Islamic State, by Transhistorical standards, has never existed. Therefore, could it be said that the failure to attain an Islamic state is somehow a fault of Muslims or is it the case that Islam, by its nature, deliberately keeps the spiritual and secular in separate domains? Many supporters of the Transhistorical believe that it is possible to reconstruct the state of Medina, but such a task would not only be undesirable, it would also be impossible, for modern-day conditions would not be appropriate to the conditions of seventh-century Medina.

Any political philosophy that wishes to put its theory into practice must work within the framework of the prevailing socio-economic conditions; it cannot function in isolation of the world community, nor can it shut it out and expect to survive: this is not a moral judgement, but a factual one. To discriminate against

non-Muslims and ban dissemination of secular thought necessarily results in having to set up protective barriers, leading to isolation and stagnation.

Islam is not 'secular' in the sense that secularism is perceived as an ideology which itself is anti-religious, but nor is Islam an enforcer of doctrine upon all aspects of society. Perhaps a more accurate definition of an Islamic state is one in which it can exist at various levels of 'secularization' which may, at any one time, overlap or, over a period of time, experience all levels of secularization.[1] Secularization of society need not lead to the trivialization of religion, so that the spiritual is used for profane purposes. To what degree this process of secularization is Islamic rather depends on a combination of values, both within and outside the state, within a given time period. The Islamic state, therefore, is a flexible entity which, in many ways, *defies* definition!

In the end, the issues raised by Mawdudi's writings give one an awareness that 'being Muslim' is by no means a straightforward and clear-cut affair. This observation has come to the attention of Richard Antoun:

"How are we to determine, for instance, whether the building of new mosques, the establishment of government-sponsored religious publishing houses, the setting aside of special places in parliament for prayer, the establishment of religious political parties, or the establishment of bureaus to safeguard the Holy Qur'an are indications of religious-mindedness, indications of a shift in the attitudes of elites only, or simply an increase in political action in the name of Islam? Is an increasing use of Arabic, an increase in veiling, an increase in attendance at the Friday congregational prayer, or an increase in pilgrimage to be taken as an increase in piety, religious-mindedness, or hypocrisy?"[2]

However, one thing has been made clear concerning what is the soul of Islam: it is not a monolithic entity, encompassing as it does such a variety of ethnic groups, languages, traditions and levels of development. Consequently, the banner of Islam can come under many different guises. As the anthropologist Reinhold Loeffler notes in his observations of a Persian Muslim village:

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[1] See Chapter 2 of this thesis, p. 41
[2] Antoun (1989) p. 248

"In this village, Islam can take the form of a bland legalism or a consuming devotion to the good of others; an ideology legitimizing established status and power or a critical theology challenging this very status and power; a devotive quietism or fervent zealotism; a dynamic political activism or self-absorbed mysticism; a virtuoso religiosity or humble trust in God's compassion; a rigid fundamentalism or reformist modernism; a ritualism steeped in folklore and magic or a scriptural purism."[1]

What this shows is the importance of one's (or one's group) own heritage as an expression of an understanding of the world. From a Nietzschean perspective, the important thing is whether or not that outlook promotes and enhances the species or not. For many, Islam is a 'simple' religion, summed up in the *shahada*: the idea of the oneness and unity of God, of *tawhid;* it is all that Islam stands for. Although intellectual debate will, and should continue, and, no doubt, the existence of rigid religious institutions will be with us for a long time to come, one must not forget the individual and his or her personal relationship with God; such a relationship is beyond state boundaries and no authority can interfere.

3. The Assertion of the Human Will: The Paradigm that Matters

"I have not been asked, as I should have been asked, what the name Zarathustra means in precisely my mouth, in the mouth of the first immoralist...Zarathustra was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the actual wheel in the working of things: the translation of morality into the realm of metaphysics, as force, cause, end-in-itself...Zarathustra created this most fateful of errors, morality: consequently he must also be the first to recognise it...His teaching, and his alone, upholds truthfulness as the supreme virtue - that is to say, the opposite of the cowardice of the 'idealist', who takes flight in face of reality; Zarathustra has more courage in him than all other thinkers put together."[2]

The emphasis on courage, on nobility and ability to face reality are considered the true virtues of the great man; rather than the "cowardice" of false idealism.

"I deny first a type of man who has hitherto counted as the highest, the good, the benevolent, beneficent; I deny secondly a kind of morality which has come to be

[1] Loeffler (1988) p. 246
[2] Nietzsche (1979) pp. 127 - 128

accepted and to dominate as morality in itself - decadence morality, in more palpable terms Christian morality"[1]

Zoroaster is the first prophet to claim that salvation can be obtained through moral behaviour; thus personal responsibility comes to the forefront: one will be judged on the Day of Judgment. Time is perceived as linear, moving morally towards its final consummation in the struggle between good and evil. Nietzsche recognises the Abrahamic tradition of prophetic religions that appeal to an authority higher than the ancestral or the civil - a tradition that Islam is a part of - but he would argue that they originate much further back than that: to the work of Zarathustra. This understanding of history is very perceptive; the recognition that Hebrew prophets would have been influenced by Zoroastrian, as well as Greek, thought during their period of exile.[2]

On many occasions in the notes from the composition of *Zarathustra* Nietzsche portrays Zarathustra as a lawgiver (*Gesetzgeber*), ranking him alongside Buddha, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. It is noteworthy that at the birth of Jesus, it is the Magi - the Zoroastrian priest - who, by following the star, recognizes the fulfilment of prophecy. Such is the recognition of Christianity to its precedents.

"Zarathustra, the first psychologist of the good, is - consequently - a friend of the wicked. When a decadent species of man has risen to the rank of the highest species of man, this can happen only at the expense of its antithetical species, the species of man strong and certain of life."[3]

Like Nietzsche, Muhammad Iqbal was disillusioned with what he saw as Western decadence and felt a need for renewal and reform within Islamic society if it was not also to be subsumed by the Western disease. As Nietzsche looked to Zarathustra for this, so Iqbal looked to Muhammad.

In the prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* the prophet descends to humanity after ten years of solitude in a cave and announces that man is something to be overcome. Muhammad also spent many years in a cave and also descended to

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[1] Nietzsche (1979) p. 128
[2] Lampert (1986) p.3
[3] Nietzsche (1979) p.130

humanity to announce a new message. The theme of isolation in the heights, followed by enlightenment and announcement is a common motif in religious belief.

"You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now man is more of an ape than any ape...The Superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: The Superman *shall be* the meaning of the earth!"[1]

Nietzsche talks of the future of man; a different kind of humanity. It must be pointed out that so far there has never been a true *Übermensch*; only figures from the past who, in their own way, represent the virtues required. Man is the rope tied between animal and *Übermensch*: He must overcome himself; the opposite of which is the desire for self-preservation which characterizes the attitude of 'the last man': humanity which has discovered happiness and contentment but, as a result, no longer is prepared to take risks, to experiment with potentiality. This man is like the characters from Huxley's *Brave New World*; free of disease and tragedy but, as a result, lacking the true joys and passions that mankind is so capable of. Nietzsche talks of potentiality; of that which is truly possible, hence his rejection of the transcendental. But, Iqbal argues, Muhammad, too, spoke of the divine within the human: that man is, in fact, capable of overcoming the transcendent and taking part in divinity. In this respect, the separation between the divine and human can be linked for, otherwise, humanity would be lost at sea. The rope that ties man to God can, in that sense, be pulled in. In both respects, therefore, the emphasis is on *man*: not to rely upon an exterior force, but to look within himself and be self-disciplined enough to overcome his natural, animal-like inclinations. Nietzsche was concerned with an empty relativism: a humanity where there are no longer any distinctions or judgments of taste since every viewpoint is recognised as valid. It is a rejection of pluralism. With the notion of the *Übermensch* we have someone who is prepared to put aside comfort and security in the quest for greatness, for to go beyond good and evil as understood by the masses is to take risks and even put one's own life in danger. Muhammad represents a man - and he was 'only' a man - who, despite doubts as to his own

[1] Nietzsche (1969) p. 42

purpose, puts aside the security of a successful business and a loving wife, as well as a respected member of society. He becomes an outcaste, mocked by many and even believes himself to have gone mad. All signs of the *Übermensch* will appear as signs of illness or madness to the human herd.

"Everyone wants the same thing, everyone is the same: whoever thinks otherwise goes voluntarily into the madhouse."[1]

Despite his attack on all idols, Nietzsche is also caught within an ideal: the *Übermensch* gives him hope for the future; an archetype that acts as a meditative force to guide one through the present and into the future. This is Nietzsche's own Transhistorical ideal. Yet this Transhistorical, this paradigm, is that of the will of the human being

Is such an aristocratic value of self-creation, the *Übermensch*, compatible with a liberal polity? For Nietzsche it is necessary to recognise that in the modern age belief in unconditional authority and absolute truth is on the wane. What is distinctive of the modern age is the secularisation of political authority: "In the sphere of higher culture there will always have to be sovereign authority, to be sure – but this sovereign authority will hereafter lie in the hands of the *oligarchs of the spirit*."[2] What is needed to cure social ills "is not forcible redistribution of property but a gradual transformation of mind: the sense of justice must grow greater in everyone and the instinct for violence weaker."[3] The capacity to build a new future depends on an ability to see a continuity with the strength of past traditions. An important passage in *Human, All too Human*, called 'Religion and Government' notes that the importance of religion in the life of a culture is that it consoles the hearts of individuals in times of loss, deprivation and fear; that is, in times when a government is powerless to alleviate the sufferings of people in times of such tragedies as famine and war. However, the increase in democracy has seen a parallel decline in the importance of religion and a greater emphasis on the ego. This, Nietzsche stresses, is not 'individualism':

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[1] Nietzsche (1969) p 46
[2] Nietzsche (1986a) 261
[3] *ibid.* 452

"...the widely held view of him [Nietzsche] as an extreme individualist, or an existentialist, solely preoccupied with the nature of an asocial, isolated individual, is profoundly misleading...Nietzsche's commitment is to culture and to the citizen, not to the abstract private individual of modern liberal democracy. Like the political thinking of Rousseau and Hegel, Nietzsche's political thought is characterised from beginning to end by a desire to transcend the atomistic basis of modern societies and its narrow, 'bourgeois', individualism."[1]

With the decline in political absolutism sanctioned by divine law, there is the possibility that the state too will break apart as political authority loses its reverence. Nietzsche hopes that the increase in the secular will lead to a new period of toleration, pluralism and wisdom if chaos and anarchy are to be avoided. Nietzsche is not anti-democratic so long as it leaves space for the rare, the unique, and the noble. Democracy does not necessarily lead to the death of high culture and noble values, provided that culture and politics can give each other space. Nietzsche believes that democracy is the political form of the modern world which is best able to offer the best protection of culture; that is, of art, of religion, of all creativity. He says he is "speaking of democracy as something yet to come"[2] and favours a social order which "keeps open all the paths to the accumulation of moderate wealth through work"[3], while preventing "the sudden or unearned acquisition of riches." Nietzsche wishes to preserve a private/public distinction, whereas modern liberal society – although its ideology of the privatisation of politics allows individuals a great degree of private freedom – undermines notions of culture and citizenship.[4] Democratic politics can promote and further culture and, in the recognition that with modernity comes the absence of any possibility of ethical universality, the best hope for the future is that there *exists* a culture. As with Nietzsche, so with Islam: the future should not lie with one, monolithic belief system in which we are ruled over by Philosopher-Kings; rather, the realisation that there is a plurality of beliefs and traditions should lead to a future society that embraces such difference whilst not going all the way to the emptiness of the secular.

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[1] Ansell-Pearson (1994) p.87
[2] Nietzsche (1986b) 293
[3] *ibid* 285
[4] Ansell-Pearson (1994) p. 95

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Note: Unless otherwise stated, all translations of the Qur'an are by N.J. Dawood, Fifth revised edition, 1990. Penguin

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