

ISLAM AND SCIENCE:
RESPONDING TO A FALSE APPROACH

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In this response article, some of the most challenging aspects of Islam and science discourse are discussed. Responding to the specific issues of the relationship between Islam and science and the normative Islamic tradition, the article explores the claims of a secular view that there is no such thing as essential Islam and that there is no relationship between Islam and the scientific tradition that arose in the Islamic civilization. This view is refuted on the basis of historical, logical and internal evidence.

Keywords: Islam and science relationship; refutation of secularist viewpoint; Islamic tradition; normative practice; early history of Islam.

Ignoring the mocking tone of Dimitri Gutas' article, "Islam and Science: A False Statement of the Problem", which appears in this issue of *Islam & Science*, and focusing on his essential arguments, one is left with an abundance of personal opinions based on misconstrued "evidence", misinterpreted historical data, misused terminology and a reasoning steeped in intellectual aberration of the first order. But despite the incoherence of his arguments, some of the objections he has raised in his sarcastic article are so much in the air these days that this frontal attack on Islam and Islamic tradition needs a response. Setting aside the attempt made by Gutas to arrogate the right to define the *raison d'être* of the journal (... "the problem that this journal is established to discuss with the hope that eventually some solutions may emerge, is stated in terms which themselves are part of the problem"), simply because it is obvious that it is not the right of a contributor to a journal to define its scope, what is of interest to us here is the broad spectrum of essential arguments which Gutas has used in a sarcastic manner, and not his self-assuming role. Let

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us begin by summarizing his views on Islam and the relationship between Islam and science. He holds that:

- (i) There is nothing that can be called essential Islam; there are many different understandings of Islam, each identified by its historical time and locality, and with multiple contents, not always in harmony with each other.
- (ii) There is no link whatsoever between Islam as a religion and the great scientific efflorescence that was seen during the [ʿAbbāsid period]. “Or, to put it differently, there is no discernible evidence in the sources that the set of beliefs adhered to by the ʿAbbāsid elite at that time and place, and which comprised Islam in their view, was in any way instrumental in their promotion of scientific and philosophical activity; religion was quite neutral in these historical developments” (216).¹ He adds that “the same kind of neutrality of Islam as a religion vis-à-vis scientific developments has been also observed for later centuries and different localities in the Islamic world” (217).
- (iii) “Islam, as a religion, and at whatever historical moment it is taken, is a specific ideology of a particular, historically determined society. As such, like all other social ideologies that command adherence and respect by the majority of the population because of their emotive content, it is inert in itself and has no historical agency but depends completely on who is using it and to what ends. In other words, like all ideologies, it is an instrument that can cut both ways, good and bad, and as such it lends itself to manipulation by the managers of society who may use it for whatever purposes their interest dictates” (217).

This response deals with these three essential points. Gutas has also made several parenthetical derisive remarks which refer to other substantial issues; some of these will also be dealt with in the course of this response along with a reply to his final point about the status of science in the contemporary Muslim world.

1. All references to Gutas' article are from his “Islam and Science: A False Statement of the Problem” in *Islam & Science*, Vol. 1 (December 2003) No. 2, pp. 215-20.

Is There Anything That Can Be Called Normative Islam?

Although not couched in a post-modern narrative, Gutas' attempt to deconstruct Islam and Islamic tradition not only stems from a false understanding of revelation-based religions, but is also fraught with many illogical internal flaws. To claim that there is no such thing as normative Islam on the basis of the fact that the Qur'ān was revealed over an extended period of time in Makkah and Madinah is to misconstrue the very notion of Islam. And to claim that this “was indirectly acknowledged by the early Muslim scholars” (216) because they “categorized and discriminated the Qur'ānic surahs into Makkan and Madinan” (216) is simply absurd, if not outright dishonest. This conception about Islam is incorrect because, like all prophets who claimed to have received revelation before him, the Prophet of Islam began his prophetic mission on a specific day, at a very specific place, with a very specific first revelation. Revelation continued over the next 23 years, but this does not mean that the essential message of Islam was going through some kind of evolutionary process, because over this entire period, the Qur'ān continued to reiterate the same basic message over and over, in various ways. Moreover, it is to be noted that this essential message that the Qur'ān so poignantly placed before humanity in the seventh century is the same message that had been revealed to all other prophets during the long course of human history. *He has revealed unto thee [O Muḥammad] the Book with truth; confirming that which was [revealed] before it, even as He revealed the Torah and the Injil (Gospel).*²

Thus, it should be obvious to an honest mind that the central message of the Qur'ān, the heart of Islam, cannot be dissected on a linear timeline because it has never gone through any evolutionary process constrained by historical necessities. Therefore, the core of Islam, the reified, essential inner reality of Islam, is neither a historic construct, nor a social contract; it is a metaphysical, metahistorical construct which Islam shares with other monotheistic religions. Briefly stated, this essential Islam is none other than the first part of the *shahādah* which every Muslim proclaims numerous times during the course of his or her day: *Lā ilāha il'Allah, there is no deity other than Allah.*

2. Q. 3:3. Also see Q. 12:111: *It is no invented story but a confirmation of previous [scripture], a detailed explanation of everything—guidance and mercy for those who believe.*

Due to the extraordinary simplicity of this essential message of Islam, it is possible to state the basic elements of Islam in a few words: There is a Creator Who has created all things in measure and for a purpose. Creation is of two kinds: visible and invisible. All created things have come into existence for a fixed term, after which everything will return to the Creator Who will examine their worldly existence, and pass a judgment which will lead to an eternal life in the Hereafter.

Given the simplicity of this essential core—which constitutes the fundamentals of Islam—it is simply outright dishonesty to claim that there is no such thing as a reified essential Islam. Moreover, it is to be noted that the Qurʾān insists that this essential message has remained unchanged throughout the course of human history and all prophets—who are called Muslim by the Qurʾān—have brought the same message.³ Seen from this perspective—and this is a perspective that Muslims have always held throughout their history—Islam is not a religion that began on a certain day of 610 AD with the first revelation received by Prophet Muḥammad while he was in the cave of Ḥirāʾ, a few miles south of Makkah; rather, Islam has existed in its essential form since the beginning of human existence on earth. No doubt, Prophet Muḥammad was given a specific Law, *Sharīʿah*, distinct from the Law given to other prophets, but the distinguishing elements of these Laws have nothing to do with their essential core. Thus, to claim that Islam was in some sort of flux during the life of Prophet Muḥammad and then mockingly ask a rhetorical question: “If, therefore, one wishes to adopt as normative an idealized ‘Islam’ during the time of the Prophet one would have to decide which year’s—or even month’s—version in the life of the Prophet that ‘Islam’ would be” (216), is to impose one’s own understanding of religion upon a religious tradition that claims to be the heir of all previous revelations.

The attempt to support this conjecture by claiming that “the early Muslim scholars who, first, categorized and discriminated the Qurʾānic surahs into a Makkan and Madinan periods, and second, established prior and posterior stages in the development of Qurʾānic and hence Muslim dogma through their use of *asbāb al-nuzūl* criticism and especially that of *al-jarḥ waʿl taʿdīl*” were, in fact, attempting to make sense of the “flux” through which Islam was supposedly passing, so that they could ascertain what is normative Islam, is a brazen act of intellectual dishonesty, for it takes these tools—which were employed by the early commentators of the

3. Q. 2:132, 136; 3:67.

Qurʾān for the purpose of elucidation of the Divine message—out of their proper field and imposes them on a contemporary aberration. This anomalous attempt not only violates the dictates of a civil discourse on a sacred text—held sacred by more than one billion Muslims who now share this ravaged planet with Gutas and who deserve respect—but also makes mockery of one of the most important branches of knowledge in the Islamic tradition, that of *Tafsīr*. All early Muslim scholars, who used these tools and methods to understand, comment upon and explain the revealed text, used these tools and methods not to ascertain the contours of normative Islam, but to explain the verses of a revealed Book which had profoundly transformed their lives and unequivocally established the normative Islam through the centrality of its message. Thus to claim that there is “no such thing as a monolithic, essential Islam”, is to negate a historical reality that is self-evident.

In addition, this essential Islam, in its true sense, has always been a fixed, solid, well-defined set of beliefs about God, life and the human condition about which there has never been any doubt at any time. True, there have been, and still are, those who do not believe in these precepts as well as those who do, but that does not mean that this basic set of statements did not exist in a concrete form. Unlike the claim made by Gutas, there is, then, an irreducible core that *can* be precisely defined. This core consists of a very basic set of beliefs, which the Qurʾān reiterates over and over. Muslims not only used the occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nazūl*) but also a host of other tools to understand the varied data—ranging from references to nature to the historical record of humanity—that the Qurʾān presents to its faithful readers, but they did so not because the essential message of the Qurʾān needed to be dissected from its Makkan and Madinan periods, but because they were faced with an unearthly text which was neither poetry nor prose, a narrative par excellence that demanded utmost human effort because it had the power to expand their spiritual and intellectual horizons to a level never witnessed before.

Thus the first generation of Muslims, who developed these tools to elucidate the text of the Qurʾān, did so to benefit from the profound wisdom contained in the Book, sent down in clear Arabic (*ʿarabīyun*

mubīn),⁴ a Book that would transform the very tools known to the Arabic language and bring about an intellectual revolution of the first order.⁵

True, Muslim *fuqahā* established prior and posterior stages of the revelation, but they did so not to ascertain “the development of Qur’ānic and hence Muslim dogma”, as Gutas misconstrues it in terms that are utterly foreign to Islam, but to situate certain legal aspects of the Qur’ānic revelation in their historical context and to establish the order of revelation of those verses which established these laws pertaining to the moral conduct. The understanding of this domain of human activity, based on the precept of boundaries of Allah, *ḥadūd Allah*, which was required to pass legal rulings on the permissible and the impermissible, *halāl and harām*, in no way constrained the essential core of Islam which deals with the reality of a transcendent God, His Unicity (*Tawḥīd*), the Hereafter, the Unseen, angels and Judgment.

Further, to claim that this revealed text, which was to transform those who first heard it at the most fundamental level of existence and which has continued to transform the lives of millions of individuals throughout history, is not an agent of change in Muslim societies is itself a dogmatic assertion that defies historical reality. Even a most cursory look at history is sufficient to know that from the moment of its revelation in Makkah to this day, the Qur’ān has continued to affect all aspects of life for Muslims. From birth to death and from the rites of marriage to the most mundane aspects of daily life, the life of a Muslim is continuously directed, guided and influenced by the Qur’ān. At the social level, how could Muslim societies as a whole not be influenced by the Qur’ān since Muslim societies consist of individual Muslims and the lives of individual Muslims are deeply influenced by this revealed text? Further, to reduce Islam to an *understanding of Islam*, conditioned by history and geography, is incorrect because, as stated above, Islam is essentially a set of beliefs which cannot be circumambulated by history and geography.

The modus operandi used by Gutas to arrive at his conclusions is none other than that magic wand of secularism, reductionism, which has been applied here indiscriminately to confound and confuse matters. This

4. Q. 16:103.

5. For a detailed discussion of the Qur’ānic influence on the resources of Arabic language and its role in the making of Islamic intellectual tradition, see Iqbal, M. (2002), *Islam and Science*, Ashgate, Aldershot, pp. 29-38.

makes Islam, the religion, synonymous with Muslim history. Once this equation is established, then it is easy to jump to the conclusion that “there is, then, no historical essential ‘Islam’...there are different understandings of Islam, each identified by its historical time and locality, and with multiple contents, not always in harmony with each other” (216). Contrary to this reductive conclusion and built into the very notion of Islam—which literally means surrender to God—is the notion of a transhistorical and transcendent God who has fashioned human beings with a predisposition to recognize this transcendent Being at the most fundamental level of existence. This quality is borne out of the natural constitution of humanity. At this basic level, Islam has always existed without any ambiguity about its essential message. With the revelation of the Qurʾān—which closed the prophetic cycle—humanity has a final Book which continues to direct and guide all those who wish to benefit from this source of guidance directly concerned with the fate of the individual human being in the very process of his or her life. The Qurʾān addresses humans in the most intimate manner, inviting them to read in nature and history signs of a transcendent Real, Who is the Creator of everything that exists.⁶ This insistent invitation of the Qurʾān to fashion our lives according the dictates of the Creator, this direct and most urgent concern of Islam for the human family has always been what it is today. Thus whatever polity emerged in the course of historical existence of the Muslim community must never be confused with Islam itself. The transcendental perspective of Islam remains a well-defined solid core and no amount of sophistry can deconstruct it.

Is there an Islam and Science Nexus?

The next essential argument of Gutas is that Islam had nothing to do with the scientific developments that occurred in Islamic polity. He sets out by taking the example of the first two centuries of ‘Abbāsīd rule in Baghdad when the Graeco-Arabic translation movement was in full force, and claims that “the great scientific efflorescence that was seen during this period was quite unrelated to anybody’s understanding of Islam—or, to put it differently, there is no discernible evidence in the sources that the set of beliefs adhered to by the ‘Abbāsīd elite at that time and place, and which comprised Islam in their view, was in any way instrumental in their promotion of scientific and philosophical activity” (217). Then he extends

6. Q. 6:102; 13:16; 30:20-5, 46; 39:62; 40:13; 41:38-9.

the scope of his argument to claim that “religion was quite neutral in these historical developments” (217). And finally, he quotes an article by Ahmad Dallal⁷ to further extend his argument to cover the entire Muslim history by making a sweeping statement: “The same kind of neutrality of Islam as a religion vis-à-vis scientific developments has been also observed for later centuries and different localities in the Islamic world” (217).

Here Gutas not only falls short of usual academic norms by not indicating his “sources”, he does not even seem to understand the question; he looks for relationship between Islam and science at the most facile level of ‘Abbāsid court. In order to ascertain whether or not Islam had anything to do with the scientific tradition that came into existence in the eighth century and lasted well into the fifteenth century in lands extending from the heart of Arabia to Samarqand in Central Asia and al-Andalus in Europe, we first need to understand the question itself. According to Gutas’ reductive approach, this question can be answered merely by determining whether or not the ‘Abbāsid elite was motivated by its religious beliefs to promote scientific and philosophical activity. And since he cannot find any “discernable evidence” for this in his undisclosed sources, he concludes that “Islam as a religion was neutral vis-à-vis scientific developments”. Bereft of any understanding of the question itself—let alone its answer—and short on evidence, he relies on an article by Ahmad Dallal, published in a general book on Islam, an article that has come out of the same secular dogmatic factory which has produced Gutas’ article—a reductive scholarship which insolently attempts to universalize and impose its own conception of civilizations upon all traditions over the entire span of human history. This is not the place to look into the details of this arrogance that is so prevalent in the Western academia, but let us note that the article by Ahmad Dallal, which is quoted by Gutas in support of his claim and which is used by him to extend his argument, devotes a whole page (p. 213) to dogmatically repeat that science in the Muslim world was a secular enterprise without citing any reasons for this or without even explaining what it means to make such a statement. Moreover, the same article, in fact, establishes a direct link between Muslim scientists and religious institutions: “most of the distinguished physicians and astronomers of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Syria and

7. Dallal, Ahmad, “Science, Medicine and Technology” in Esposito, J. (ed. 1999), *The Oxford History of Islam*, Oxford University Press, London and New York, pp. 155-213.

Cairo were employed as jurists, teachers in madrasa-like institutions, or timekeepers in the region's major mosques".⁸

Furthermore, Dallal's article is riddled with other internal inconsistencies at the level of terminology, conception, and use of data. He calls science that arose in the Muslim world a "cultural activity", then he names the same science, "Islamic science",⁹ and a little later, this same science becomes "Arab science".¹⁰ Beyond this confused state of affairs at the level of terminology, the article suffers from conceptual inaccuracies and contradictions. For instance, after asserting that religion had nothing to do with the emergence of science and the great translation movement that would bring a vast corpus of ancient knowledge into this new scientific tradition, he states that "the context for ninth-century scientific translations from Greek into Syriac was decidedly Islamic",¹¹ and as if this was not enough of a contradiction, he points out—and this is the most important internal inconsistency of this approach—that

the inherited traditions of Galenic medicine,
Ptolemaic astronomy and optics, Euclidean geometry,

8. Dallal (1999), p. 213.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 157. It is important to note that "Arabic science" is a term contrived by secular historians of science to purge the vast scientific enterprise of the Islamic civilization of its legitimate religious grounding. By using this term they hope to redraw the boundaries of the discourse through changing its terms. Aware that their dogma cannot be supported by any solid evidence, they use a facile justification which argues that since the language of this scientific activity was Arabic, it is, hence, appropriate to use this term. Their fabrication stands alone, for one finds no other precedent in which the scientific enterprise of a civilization is denoted by the language in which it is written; Cantonese science, Hindi science, or Gaelic science are not recognized categories. When descriptors such as Greek Science and English Science are used, they refer to people or nations, rather than languages. In the case of the Islamic scientific tradition, it is obviously inaccurate to call it Arabic Science because those who contributed to this enterprise were not always Arabs and, in fact, some of the best-known Muslim scientists were non-Arabs. Furthermore, this anomaly does not exist in other branches and aspects of Islamic civilization; Islamic architecture, Islamic calligraphy, and Islamic motifs in various crafts are all recognized, standard terms.

11. Dallal (1999), p. 161.

and Diophantine arithmetic were all conceptually situated within the unifying context of Aristotelian physics. In these fields[,] the Arabic sciences simultaneously refined, deconstructed, expanded, and superseded the Greek traditions. The most notable characteristics of the Arabic sciences are the generation of syntheses and the related creation of new sciences. With many more disciplines that correspond to a much larger range of research interests, the Arabic sciences were not bound by the rigid categories of scientific thinking that prevailed in the older traditions.¹²

What was used to “deconstruct” this received material? What provided the framework for the expansion of these sciences? What was the locus of new sciences and how could a synthesis be generated without metaphysical principles that form and guide a civilization? Dallal, like some other Muslims trained in the West, provides no answer to such fundamental questions but merely repeats the secular dogma received under the tutelage of Western scholars who leave them uprooted, torn between two worldviews and hence divided within.¹³

Parenthetical Notes

One cannot remain indifferent to two parenthetical points in the article by Gutas which are not directly related to the question he was addressing: the existence of various Qur’ānic readings (*qirā’āt*) and the emergence of different legal schools (*madhāhib*) in Islam. Gutas contends that this happened because of “epistemological and social reasons” (217) and because Muslim scholars of the third and fourth centuries of Hijra “knew that it was impossible to verify the various traditions about these matters which all came from extremely respected and venerated teachers, and they understood perfectly well the chaos that would ensue if they tried to impugn the authority of any one of them and impose only one faction’s understanding of Islam as normative” (217).

This is a clear case of fabricating false reasons for the existence of that wonderful diversity that is so beautifully incorporated within the social dimensions of Islam and that is, in fact, rooted in its primary sources. To

12. Ibid., p. 212.

13. For a more detailed exploration of the question of nexus between Islam and science, see Iqbal (2002), pp. 71-124.

claim that vast range of practices and the flexibility offered by the life of the Prophet of Islam is merely because the scholars of the third and the fourth centuries of Hijra had difficulty in ascertaining the veracity of various traditions is utterly false, because this flexibility and diversity is built into the very *modus operandi* of Islam, which has a universalist approach to all things pertaining to practices; this allows members of our vast and diverse humanity to submit to the commands of their Creator without being hindered by social customs, climate, geographical dictates of their residence on earth and other peripheral matters. This universal nature of the message of Islam was well-understood by the Companions of the Prophet as well as those who followed them (*Ṭabiʿīn*) and within the first two centuries of Islam, these scholars developed extensive sciences related to the principles (*aṣūl*) and branches (*farūʿ*) of their faith. The emergence of various legal schools (*madhāhib*) was a natural outcome of this vast intellectual reflection and does not mean that there are many different Islams at different historical moments, as Gutas implies. His insistent use of prefixes with the names of Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Ḥazm, al-Ghazālī, and Ibn Taymiyya lacks civility because he is giving their preference for a given legal school in certain practices an importance that seems to become a defining factor of their faith; it is indicative of a malevolent motive; none of these scholars of Islam considered themselves followers of Abū Ḥanīfah or Imām Mālik; they were all following the Qurʾān and the Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam and all of them are known to have respected the legal opinions of other schools to such an extent that on occasions they would publicly display this respect by offering an obligatory prayer or by performing some other act of worship in a manner that was characteristic of the other legal schools.¹⁴

As far as the seven Qurʾānic readings (*qirāʾāt*) are concerned, it is incorrect to attribute their existence to sociological factors; the presence of these readings was a fact well known to all Companions of the Prophet

14. For a more detailed exploration of this theme, see al-Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn (reprn. 1989), edited by ʿAbd al-Qayyūm b. Muḥammad Shāfiʿī al-Bastawī, *Ikhtilāf al-Madhāhib*, Dār al-ʿIṭiṣām, Cairo; al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid, *Fayṣal al-Tafriqa bayna al-Islām wa al-Zandaqa*, translated by Jackson, Sherman A. (2002), as *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam*, Oxford University Press, Karachi.

who told them that “Jibra’īl first recited the Qur’ān to me according to one *ḥarf*, I asked for more until he reached seven *ḥaruf*.”¹⁵

Is Islam an Ideology?

Gutas calls Islam an ideology “of a particular, historically determined society” (217). This is a false assertion at several levels. At the etymological level, it betrays a lack of understanding of the term ideology, as distinct from “religion”, and at the level of its application, it is simply an imposition of Gutas’ own categorization of religion. Islam as a religion is not an ideology; it is a set of beliefs based on revelation that is transcendent and transhistorical. To assert that “it is inert in itself and has no historical agency” (217) is to defy history itself. Islam has always inspired action at the personal and social levels and it continues to do so today. There may be an aspect of this action in the social realm that lends itself to “the manipulation by the managers of society who may use it for whatever purposes their interest dictates”, but that does not reduce Islam itself to a degree of inertness to warrant the judgment that “Islam has no historical agency in itself”. The Qur’ān, which inspires, defines, and regulates all things in Islamic civilization, is neither an inert Book of aphorisms nor a cold, intellectual discourse on mysteries of life; it is direct, emphatic, and demanding. It seizes the human heart in the very act of contemplation. It draws intellect by continuously re-focusing its attention to an Omnipotent Creator, Who makes His presence felt by His Signs spread throughout the cosmos and within the confines of human existence. This high modality of divine presence creates a constant sense of movement in all things Islamic—from acts of worship to construction of astrolabes. Hence, far from being static and inert, Islam is imbued with movement; its rites and customs pulsate with movement—from ritual prayers to the rites of Ḥajj, there is a harmonic movement that directs believers toward the ultimate transcendent reality.

Science in the Contemporary Muslim World

Finally, Gutas’ rhetorical question about the state of science in the contemporary Muslim world deserves a response. He reduces the highly complex question of scientific research to political and social dimensions,

15. Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān, Bāb unzil’ al-Qur’ān ‘alā sab’at Aḥruf; for further details on the seven readings see Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn (reprnt. 1343 AH, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm), *al-Itqān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, Manshūrāt al-Riḍā-Bidār, Cairo.

which are, no doubt part of the complex, inter-related and highly integrated set of conditions that give rise to excellence in science but these are, by no stretch of imagination, the only factors. Even within this restricted domain, however, he merely remains within the sphere of facile rhetoric: “How can modern scientific research be conducted when there is no access, for all the young people aspiring to become scientists, to information and financial means? And in which state in the Islamic world is there unfettered access to information of all sorts, when the various regimes cling to power through restrictions of free speech and constant surveillance of citizens and the harassment (and worse) of dissidents? To put it plainly by highlighting one aspect of the problem: in which modern state of the Islamic world is there a research library of the caliber of a major American or northern European university library, with open stacks and borrowing privileges?” (219)

Quite painfully, he evokes Baghdad—now under occupation by the military of his own country—without citing the atrocities of the contemporary imperialism of his country or the deep wound inflicted by the previous colonizers that severed the roots of the Islamic intellectual tradition in the Muslim lands during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. He maintains that “the problem is political and social” but completely ignores the social and political impact of colonization of the Muslim world, the destruction of institutions and traditional life-styles, the uprooting of noble families who patronized arts and sciences, the appropriation of *waqf* (endowment) properties by the colonizers and the installment of puppet regimes in the Muslim lands—all of which fall within the social and political domains, and all of which contributed toward the emergence of the contemporary Muslim world, which is now being ruled by military dictators, self-proclaimed kings and lackeys of the Western powers, most notably the United States of America. These governments neither represent the will of the masses, nor are interested in Islam and its social values; they are simply serving their masters. Therefore, to point toward the status of science in the contemporary Muslim world without referring to the conditions in which more than one billion Muslims are striving to exist in an increasingly hostile and oppressive climate, is cruel, dishonest and unbecoming of a scholar who is also a historian of the intellectual tradition of Islam. A polity whose institutions, traditions, social and cultural fabric have been torn by a protracted process of colonization cannot be expected to produce science

while it is being ruled by hired men, appointed and supported by those who wish to impose their own worldview on the rest of the world.

In response to the question of reinvigoration of the intellectual and scientific tradition, Gutas says that “asking this question in the context of a discussion of ‘Islam and Science’ is irrelevant” (219), and goes on to ask rhetorically, “what does ‘Islam’ have to do with the existence of libraries or not, in the various Muslim societies, past and present?” Once again, one senses a malevolent intent, once again there is the mocking attitude that attempts to remove Islam, the religion, from the cultural and civilizational currents that govern Islamic polity. The problem here is not only rooted in a secularized understanding of civilizations, it is also to be traced to a willful ignorance of the numerous fundamental links and connections that exist between educational institutions, laboratories, libraries, economic and social institutions, market forces and numerous other relations that make up the complex world of contemporary science.