ISLAM, MODERNITY, AND THE HUMAN SCIENCES

ALI ZAIDI

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Ali Zaidi

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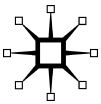

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In the Name of God, the Most Merciful,
the Most Mercy-Giving

For Ashie, Mustapha, and Sadiq

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Foreword

This is an exciting and timely book. It is exciting because it has the courage to attack two major taboos upheld, respectively, by religious fundamentalists and secular social scientists. On the side of religious fundamentalists, the taboo consists in the negative verdict that ostracizes modernity in all its forms, including modern social science, as a mode of apostasy and ignorance [*jahiliyya*]. On the side of secular social scientists, the taboo involves the expulsion of religious faith as irrelevant and even inimical to the study and understanding of social life. Ali Zaidi's book has the merit of boldly debunking these prejudices. As he shows, religious faith—especially Islamic faith—cannot avoid intimate engagement with modern society and social science if it wishes to prevent spiritual suffocation and self-enclosure in stale, reactionary mantras. At the same time, modern social science cannot afford to encapsulate itself complacently in positivistic formulas without losing access to the very lifeblood animating concrete social experience. The book ably critiques the temptation to escape from social experience into perennial verities as well as the pretense of equating traditional theology with social-scientific knowledge. In venturing beyond entrenched taboos, Ali Zaidi offers illuminating discussions of such important thinkers as Ibn Khaldun, Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Weber, and Hans-Georg Gadamer. One can only wish his book the widest possible readership. May his plea in favor of a close engagement and reconciliation between religious faith and social experience bear ample fruit, *inshallah*.

Fred Dallmayr
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University of Notre Dame

Acknowledgments

This book begins at a fork in the road: as a doctoral candidate, I was confronted by the tension between my unyielding theoretical drive on the one hand and a lukewarm desire for ethnographic, empirical research on the other. The theoretical drive won out, and led me down the path of the theorist, mostly working late and alone at night. The saving grace has been the many friends along the way: Dalibor Misina rendered material help and care at critical times, and long conversations with him were always refreshing and revitalizing; Katherine Bullock introduced me to the Muslim Graduate Study Group (MGSG), which was a source of much intellectual stimulation at a crucial stage of my journey; Andrzej Wiercinski's gift of his three volume edited series on hermeneutics reaffirmed for me the humaneness of hermeneutic scholars; the 2006 Summer Academy in Essen on "Islam and the Re-positioning of Islam," convened by Armando Salvatore and Georg Stauth, came at just the right time for me to present my work and meet many bright, engaged young scholars, among whom Ahmet Okumus and Ho Wai Yip I now happily count among my friends and with whom I look forward to future endeavors; I was fortunate enough to spend a research term during the Fall of 2007 at the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) in Leiden, where Martin van Bruinessen and Jeanette Jouilli invited me to present my work on dialogue to a meeting of the NWO working group on tradition and secularity in Europe. Recep Senturk and Syed Farid Alatas convened the Second International Ibn Khaldun Symposium where I presented part of the chapter on Ibn Khaldun. Students in my Dialogue and Critique course at Wilfrid Laurier University have endured explorations into the wide terrain of this book with good humor and, surprisingly, in some cases with especially keen interest. Louise Robert deserves mention for taking up my ideas in a particularly dedicated manner, and for her meticulous help with the manuscript.

Although I was not able to study under Muhammad Fayyaz, I am grateful for our lasting friendship. His eagerness to discuss my endeavors in late-night conversations encouraged me and enabled me to sharpen my formulations. Indeed, his thoughts became clearer to me as I approached the end of my study. I am indebted to him for giving me his entire collection of books—a scholar's life-long treasure!—without which the research for much of this work would have taken much longer to complete. Derek Sayer indulged my first foray into this area and recommended that I wrestle with Weber. Ray Morrow profoundly recognized that students of sociology need much greater exposure to philosophy in order to reflect upon the philosophical and normative presuppositions underlying empirical theory. His teaching opened up for me vistas that otherwise I could not have glimpsed but obscurely.

I have not met a more profound scholar and a gentler soul than Professor Fred Dallmayr, whose generosity of spirit is matched only by his willingness to support young scholars! Malcolm Blincow has provided the unflagging support and belief in my project that is so crucial to a young scholar. Brian Singer took the time to provide written commentaries, without which I would not have made it through the maze of my own thoughts. I am thankful to Ratiba Hadj-Moussa for helping me roam intellectually. In an age that compels one to specialize, I had the benefit of a supervisor who not only did not stifle my incorrigible generalist streak, but also recognized the importance of comparative theoretical work of a general nature, which alone allows us to ask the most meaningful questions.

My colleagues in the Department of Global Studies rolled up their sleeves and took on added duties without complaint during my research term at ISIM. Alex Latta, in particular, deserves mention for shouldering much departmental service at a very early stage in his career. I'm thankful to have him as a colleague and friend. Michel Desjardins jumped head-first into our department and mentored us with a steady hand. Could there have been a better Chair at such a crucial time for me?

No part of this journey would have been possible without my families. Chacha, Khala, and Noni have supported me, my wife and our children with love and security, and many warm meals. My brothers not only undertook filial duties in my absence, but also taught me many things: from Ahsan, I learned that adversity only makes you stronger; from Mohsin, I learned the power of faith and belief; from Rizwan, I learned the meaning and value of skepticism and critique.

My parents provided the strongest of foundations, which cracked but did not fall even when earthquakes shook us.

My deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Ashie, and to our children, Mustapha and Sadiq, for enduring all the travails with patience and forgiveness. Mustapha and Sadiq have been like a soothing balm, while Ashie's love has been transformative. Her patience and endurance only grew stronger as the years went by, and I shall not be able to repay the sacrifices she made. It is because of, and for them, that I have finally made it to this point in the road.

Many people have a rightful claim to their share of the credit for this project; needless to say, they are absolved for the sins, major or minor, that continue to plague it.

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A Note on Transliteration

Since this book aspires to be an interdisciplinary work in comparative social theory, rather than a specialist treatment of Islamic thought, diacritics have not been used in transliterating Arabic terms. I have rendered such terms using standard English spelling; in any case, many of the Arabic terms employed herein have already been, or are in the process of becoming, absorbed into the English language.

1

Social Theory and Dialogical Understanding

Introduction

Modernity and a Loss of Meaning

"*Na Amrika, na Rusia, superpower hai Khuda.*"[1] Even if one part of this slogan has come true, is there not more to it than simply its anti-imperialist sentiment? Does not the invocation of God as the only superpower reveal a more generalized desire to re-enchant the modern world? Similarly, is there not more to the attacks of 9/11 than political grievances, despite Osama Bin Laden's reference to 80 years since the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate? Ironically, like so much else, lost amidst the debris of 9/11 is the deadly combination of rational scientific calculation with a martyr's heavenly reward. Whatever else 9/11 represents, surely it stands as a preeminent sign of the appropriation and deployment of modern scientific knowledge, technology, and skill against the very heart of economic and institutional modernity in the name of religion. It is the deployment of modernity against itself. Two generations earlier, the Nazis had turned the technological fruits of modernity against the Jews, many of whom were the leading lights of modernity. 9/11 reminds us of the distinction that the Frankfurt School made between formal and substantive rationality and alerts us that "others" have appropriated the scientific, rational calculations of large-scale death and destruction—the dark underbelly of modernity—just as cultural modernity becomes globalized.

Yet the critique of the disenchantment of politics—that is, of the removal of God and the Big Questions of meaning—and the desire to re-enchant the world that is implicit in the above slogan are paralleled in other spheres of life, which are often obscured by a narrow focus on the political. But to what extent is it true that the disenchantment of knowledge is an *a priori* condition for the modern human sciences? In other words, is it possible to synthesize religious metaphysical beliefs with the modern human sciences? Or must one jettison metaphysical

religious beliefs as excess baggage when one undertakes studies in the human sciences?

These questions arise because the modern human sciences *appear* to significantly challenge transcendent and religious explanations of the human condition in two ways. First, the human sciences posit that knowledge of the human condition has an irreducibly historical character and, therefore, there are few, if any, transhistorical truths. Second, in contrast to religious explanations, which maintain that the origin of human communities lies not in social or cultural conditions of possibility but in acts of divine intervention, the human sciences posit that positive, empirical knowledge provides a more objective and accurate account of social reality by demonstrating that the cultural identifications of a group are arbitrary, mythical, and ensnared in a web of power relations, rather than divinely ordained (Laroui 1987). By drawing upon modern ways of knowing and understanding that are rooted in critical rationalism, positivism, empiricism, historicism, and immanent and realist explanations, the human sciences seem to represent the apex of secular-cultural modernity and a clear break with a metaphysical, religious understanding of the world.

Is this, in fact, the case? Does one need to step outside the domain of the human sciences in order to ask the Big Questions about the meaning of life and transcendence? Or is it possible that the re-enchantment of knowledge can take place within the human sciences?

One quintessentially modern answer to these questions comes from Immanuel Kant who, in his critiques of reason and judgment, argues that neither logic nor experience can justify the propositions of speculative metaphysics as to the existence of God, or of an immortal soul, in sum, of the ultimate beginning and end of things. Instead, Kant proposes limiting and differentiating the realms of pure and practical reason from faith in order to ensure the legitimacy and validity of each in its own realm. What is needed, Kant argues, is a new metaphysics that can come forth as a science and can escape the antinomies of causality and freedom.

However, Kant also concedes, perhaps most tellingly in his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (1950 [1783]: 116), that there is a persistent metaphysical need in human beings to have final answers about the cause, nature, and end of things. Hence, on Kant's view, although the old speculative metaphysics is no longer viable, to forego it entirely is impossible because human beings have a *metaphysical need* that cannot be quenched by empirical knowledge alone.

Kant's resolution to this paradox—that is, the persistence of the metaphysical need and the demand for critical, scientific rigor—is to lower the horizon of thought from an other-worldly metaphysics to a this-worldly metaphysics. Kant accomplishes this lowering of the horizon of thought by differentiating an immanent from a transcendental, but not transcendent, metaphysics. An immanent metaphysics, according to Kant, is based on the application of *a priori* rational thought to phenomena that can be experienced in space and time. By contrast, a transcendental, critical metaphysics is based on the application of *a priori* rational thought to experience and to things beyond physical experience, that is, to noumena, the objects of pure rational thought. In other words, for Kant, science applies understanding only immanently (i.e., to phenomena within experience), whereas a critical metaphysics applies understanding transcendentally (i.e., to experience *and* to noumena).

The resolution to the Kantian paradox (i.e., the demand for a critical science and the persistence of the metaphysical need) and the subsequent lowering of the horizon of thought have been crucial to the development of the modern human sciences. One of the lasting implications of the Kantian paradox on the development of the human sciences in the West is that the desire to expurgate metaphysical speculation has often been heralded. But it has seldom been achieved. To take the most blatant example, Auguste Comte's pronouncement of the end of the theological and metaphysical stages of history is itself based on non-empirical presuppositions.

More salient examples are to be found in the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, the philosopher of the human sciences, and Max Weber, the most influential social scientist of the twentieth century, each of whom was influenced by the Kantian paradox. In fact, Dilthey himself describes his task as one of completing the Kantian critiques by undertaking a critique of historical reason. Although Weber does not make his connection to Kant so obvious, he does acknowledge his mutual affinity with, and according to some interpreters the direct influence of, Heinrich Rickert, a neo-Kantian of the Baden School. Crucially, their attempts to resolve the paradox of the demand for a critical human science and the persistence of the metaphysical need point in considerably different directions. For while each wrestled with the dichotomy of interpretation and causal explanation bequeathed to them by the legacies of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, in trying to resolve the paradox, Dilthey and Weber each confront the problem of human finitude, of a nihilism that stems from a human

science devoid of metaphysics and overarching meaning. It is revealing that Dilthey opts for the term *Geisteswissenschaften* whereas Weber opts for the term *Sozialwissenschaften* to refer to the human sciences because the former regards human beings as ontologically different from other natural phenomena and thereby open to interpretive understanding, rather than to the types of causal explanation that trace their lineage back to the natural sciences. Their respective response to this paradox and the subsequent neglect of Dilthey and the apotheosis of Weber as the interpretive theorist *par excellence* is no minor issue in the history of the human sciences.

Dilthey's turn to hermeneutics and dialogue has been relegated to a minor counter-current, whereas Weber's version of *verstehen*, which seeks to mediate structural causal analysis with interpretive understanding, has become one of the leading currents, if not the dominant current, in the interpretive human sciences. This has had immense consequences for the human sciences, because Weber's mediating position has been regarded as the predominant, legitimate alternative to structural explanatory accounts, whereas Dilthey's hermeneutics has largely been dismissed. Only recently has Dilthey's hermeneutics begun to find its way back into the human sciences (see, for instance, Wiercinski 2002; Harrington 2001a; How 1995; Ricoeur 1981; Bauman 1978), thanks, in large part, to the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1982 [1960]; 1976 [1966]), who sought to restore the centrality of hermeneutics to the human sciences.

While Dilthey accepts the pronouncements of the closure of metaphysics, his insistence that the human sciences are ontologically different from the natural sciences, because the former respond to the human need for meaning, keeps leading him back to the necessity of holistic and immanent-transcendent answers to life's basic questions. Dilthey struggles relentlessly to avoid reviving the otherworldly transcendent metaphysics of religious thought in his hermeneutic conception of the human sciences. At the same time, he recognizes the nihilist implications of a human science that deals with problems analytically, empirically but with no scope for the spiritual yearnings of humankind to transcend its own earthly finitude. It is this recognition that forces Dilthey to return to questions of overarching meaning and transcendence, even though this return to meaning and the restoration of metaphysics is limited to a this-worldly immanent-transcendental metaphysics.[2] Bereft of religious faith but cognizant of the persistence of the metaphysical mood, Dilthey reconstitutes the holism and teleology of a religious metaphysics in

non-religious, this-worldly secular-hermeneutic terms. For example, Dilthey searches for a way to overcome the finitude of the human condition without ceding to other-worldly explanations. He searches for something "soul-like," something that is beyond sense experience, but something that remains firmly this-worldly. Ultimately, he imbues the categories of "life," "nation," and "culture" with such immanent-transcendence.

Like Dilthey, Weber begins with the proposition that the need for meaning distinguishes the human sciences from the natural sciences. However, unlike Dilthey, Weber regards the difference between the two domains of science merely as an epistemological or methodological difference, not an ontological one, and although Weber was familiar with Dilthey's early work on descriptive psychology, he ignored Dilthey's later and much more explicit concern with the hermeneutic foundation of the human sciences. Instead, even as Weber successfully broke in his substantive writings with a vulgar historical materialism, in his methodological writings Weber remained committed to a structural and materialist analysis of sociocultural reality. Hence, Weber is far more resolute than Dilthey in warding off the incursion of any metaphysics into the human sciences. As is well known, since, according to Weber, the human sciences are empirical, concrete *sciences,* they can provide no clue to the ultimate meaning of life, nor ought they to make any concession to the metaphysical need. In his methodological essays, so adamant is Weber that metaphysics has no place in the *Sozialwissenschaften* that he reduces all ontological questions to epistemological issues, if not merely to questions of methodology and logic. Weber does not merely observe as an objective social scientist the growing disenchantment of the world. He actually feeds into it by his vigorous methodological insistence on the separation of metaphysics and science (Strauss 1953). Thus, Weber's immense methodological influence on the subsequent development of the social sciences has meant that even the Weberian interpretive current within twentieth-century social science has, for the most part, been reduced to dealing solely with questions of concrete empirical reality, often at the loss of questions of ultimate meaning, which Weber relegates to the non-scientific realm of values.

If the ultimate meaning of life cannot be touched upon by the human sciences in Weber's methodological essays, he does not entirely close the door on metaphysical questions. His substantive preoccupation with the meaning of Western exceptionalism, that is, his preoccupation with the question of why in the West alone

modern social and cognitive transformations arose, such as the development of modern science, capitalism, and formal rationality, indicates his willingness to entertain questions of intermediate meaning. For Weber, the question of what makes the West unique in the history of civilizations is a question of meaning and values, not simply a technical, empirical question. Thus, it is not the value-ladenness of his enquiries but the value-ladenness of his answers that compromises the severity of his insistence that the social sciences can provide no meaning whatsoever. Unlike his methodological essays, in his substantive analyses of rationality, religion and science, he invokes metaphysical properties such as charisma, the reawakening of the old gods and finally concedes the necessity of an "organic metaphysics." After all, from where does charisma come? From a religious point of view, as from the point of view of the philosophy of Natural Right (see, e.g., Strauss 1953), what is disingenuous about this sudden turn is Weber's belated and begrudging retreat from his severe methodological position and his final acceptance of the necessity of an immanent metaphysics. Whereas Dilthey embraces questions of meaning and the search for immanent-transcendence underlying the philosophy of the human sciences, Weber only begrudgingly resorts to an immanent, "organic metaphysics" in the last instance when the full nihilistic implications of his methodological position are too much to bear, but also too much to overcome.

From a religious point of view, the Kantian solution to the paradox of metaphysics and science substantially lowers the horizon of thought from an other-worldly transcendent metaphysics to a much reduced, critical-transcendental, this-worldly metaphysics. In this respect, the Christian theologian Karl Barth has argued that all philosophical metaphysics is immanent because epistemological concerns are limited by human categories. For Barth, only theology is transcendent, because God gives knowledge of himself beyond and apart from human categories and philosophical activities (Crockkett 2005: 516–17).

If it is banal or perhaps even misleading to say that the modern, secular human sciences deal only with this-worldly immanent metaphysics whereas traditional, religious conceptions of human knowledge deal with otherworldly transcendent metaphysics, the more interesting problem, then, is the tension between, and synthesis of, immanent and transcendent metaphysics. It is precisely this tension that is at the heart of Muslim attempts to reconstruct and re-enchant knowledge.

Islamic Social Thought and the Modern Human Sciences

Since the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Muslim intellectuals such as Jamal al din al-Afghani and Muhammad Iqbal have been preoccupied with the implications of the modern natural sciences and their compatibility with an Islamic worldview.

For instance, the ideologue-reformer Jamal al-din al-Afghani (1838–1897) and the poet cum philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938) each had to reconcile their strong anti-imperialist, pan-Islamic views with their admiration of Europe's political ideals, rationality, science, and technology, all of which they regarded as the source of Western dominance. In a characteristic statement, al-Afghani (cited in Donohue and Esposito 1982: 18) wrote:

> The Europeans have now put their hands on every part of the world. The English have reached Afghanistan; the French have seized Tunisia. In reality this usurpation, aggression, and conquest have not come from the French or the English. Rather it is science that everywhere manifests its greatness and power. Ignorance had no alternative to prostrating itself humbly before science and acknowledging its submission. In reality, sovereignty has never left the abode of science. However, this true ruler, which is science, is continually changing capitals. Sometimes it has moved from East to West, and other times from West to East…The first Muslims had no science, but, thanks to the Islamic religion, a philosophic spirit arose among them…This was why they acquired in a short time all the sciences with particular subjects that they translated from the Syriac, Persian, and Greek into the Arabic language.

Similarly, notwithstanding his anti-imperialist views, Iqbal's (1934) *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* which is concerned primarily with demonstrating the compatibility of Islamic conceptions of God, time, space, and the nature of Man with modern Western conceptions, particularly in the work of Hegel, Fichte, Bergson, and Nietzsche (Esposito 1999: 57), stands out as a significant Muslim effort at a sustained elaboration and synthesis of Western intellectual modernity. Thus, for early-twentieth century Muslim reformers, such as al-Afghani and Iqbal, the modern Western values of rationality and progress could easily be reconciled with Islam, just as the modern natural sciences were simply a continuation and further development of medieval Muslim science (Lotfalian 2004).

Much has been written about the early reformers and their liberal and modernist re-interpretations of Islam (Arkoun 2002; Kurzman 2002, 1998; Abed al-Jabri 1995 [1994]; Binder 1988). Yet it is not clear whether they recognized that modernization, based on the gross exploitation of natural resources for material progress, reflects a mechanized view of nature. Did their unqualified admiration of modern rationality and science, combined with the preoccupation of economic and political domination, blind them to the value transfers inherent in science and technology? Or did they recognize and accept such value transfers as necessary to the development of Muslim society? In effect, were their re-interpretations ultimately naïve, or were they all too aware of the implications of their syntheses? Indeed, their overwhelming desire for a practical synthesis of modernity and Islam seems to have overlooked the *ulama*'s criticisms of the modern condition, as well as the internal critique of modernity that had already emerged in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, for instance.

By the mid-twentieth century, neo-revivalists such as Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903–1979), Hassan al-Banna (1906–1949) and Syed Qutb (1906–1966),[3] eschewed the early-reformers' attempts to synthesize European emphases on rationality, science, and material development with an Islamic ethos. Rather than simply accommodating or assimilating to modernization, these neo-revivalists argued that liberalism and socialism represented secular and materialistic values, which threatened the cultural identity of Muslims.

Although it is easy to dismiss Hassan al-Banna, Qutb, and Mawdudi as Islamist ideologues and "pamphleteers" (Abou el Fadl 2001b: 156), it is worth noting that they sensed some of the implications of the cognitive transformations underlying modernity. Even if we reject Mawdudi's superficial argument that the liberal notion of popular sovereignty supersedes the sovereignty of God (Donohue and Esposito 1982: 252–60), we must acknowledge the increasing exclusion of the Divine in the political and scientific realms. Qutb's critique of modernity as an Age of *Jahilliya* [Age of Ignorance] is premised on his view that modernity's reliance upon a strictly rationalist-empiricist epistemology repudiates the authority of metaphysical truths (Euben 1997: 434–45). On Qutb's view, an epistemology that willfully rejects God's authority and revealed Truth renders life meaningless, because questions such as, "Why are we born? "How should we live?" and "Why do we die?" lie outside the domain of rationally-empirically verifiable truth. Hence, at the heart of their politics, and

of the politics of revolutionaries such as Ayatollah Khomeini,[4] is the kernel of a philosophical critique of modernity (Euben 1999, 1997; Sayyid 1997), albeit one that is inchoate and overwhelmed by their respective political projects. It is unfortunate that much of the academic literature (Euben's account being exceptional) on "Islamic fundamentalism" has, like the journalistic accounts that we often dismiss, failed to reach beyond the rhetoric of these ideologues. Even if Mawdudi's and Qutb's ideological rejections of modernity offered little in the way of systematic reconstruction, they were crucial in giving voice to the alienation experienced under increasing cultural penetration.[5]

Although the implications of modern economics for Muslim societies were raised as early as the 1930s by Khurshid Ahmad, it was only much later, beginning in the 1970s, that sustained attention was given to the implications of the human sciences for a transcendent metaphysics rooted in Islam. Since then, having come to the view that the modern human sciences are imbued with this-worldly immanent metaphysics, some Muslim intellectuals have strenuously debated how best to reconstruct and re-enchant the modern human sciences. The debate has been referred to, collectively, as the "Islamization of Knowledge"; this, however, is a misnomer, since that term refers specifically to a project inaugurated by a Palestinian-American scholar, Ismail al-Faruqi, which posits that the Western social scientific disciplines are problematic because of their inability to deal adequately with metaphysical beliefs and moral values. Yet al-Faruqi thought it possible to integrate modern human sciences into the worldview of Islam. His call to Islamize modern social sciences expresses the view he shares with early reformers, such as al-Afghani and Iqbal, that any contradictions between the modern social scientific disciplines and a conception of social knowledge rooted in Islam are not fundamental since, for him, rationality and faith can easily be reconciled only in Islam. All that is required for there to be compatibility with an Islamic worldview, according to al-Faruqi, is a certain amount of filtering and amending of the principles underlying the division of the modern social sciences and humanities.

While agreeing with al-Faruqi's emphasis on the renewal of Muslim social thought, Ziauddin Sardar and Pervez Manzoor, who are the leading members of the *Ijmali* group of Muslim intellectuals, insist that al-Faruqi's program of Islamization of Knowledge really only amounts to a superficial Islamization of disciplines, since it ignores

the most fundamental difference between an Islamic worldview based on an uncompromising transcendent, otherworldly metaphysics, and a modern one rooted in this-worldly immanence. According to the *Ijmali* group, the stark difference between these two metaphysical positions renders impossible the task of Islamization. What is needed for reconstruction is not an Islamization of existing disciplines but the development of a new disciplinary and conceptual structure that is rooted in Islam's transcendent metaphysics.

That there could be some middle ground between the transcendent metaphysics of Islam and the immanent metaphysics of modernity seems repulsive to both al-Faruqi and the *Ijmali* group, because this implies for them a form of syncretism, such as is found in Sufism, that corrupts Islam. In contrast, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the Iranian-American scholar of Islam and comparative religion and perhaps the most widely known of the participants in this debate, has drawn upon Sufism to argue precisely that modern knowledge in both the natural and human science domains can fulfill the metaphysical need only if it restores the connection between mundane, this-worldly science, and the Sacred (the Divine principle at the center of creation), which is, from his Sufi point of view, both transcendent and immanent. That this re-connection is both possible and inevitable stems from his conviction that there is within each civilization a gnostic tradition that reconciles the tension not only between an otherworldly transcendent metaphysics and a this-worldly immanent metaphysics, but also intuitive knowledge with rational knowledge.

In this vein, Mona Abaza's (2002) *Debates on Islam and Knowledge in Malaysia and Egypt* and Georg Stauth's (2002) *Politics and Cultures of Islamization in South-East Asia: Indonesia and Malaysia in the Nineteen Nineties* consider the Muslim debates on reconstruction as the assertion of indigenous knowledge and local identity against the onslaught of Western modernity. The work of these two scholars is rich in biographical detail and provides useful analyses of the institutional structure in which the proponents of reconstruction operate. Given Abaza's and Stauth's concern with the strictly sociological details of the debate, it is not surprising that they regard the debate on reconstruction as an internal discursive struggle among differing Muslim groups that has little to contribute to a global commentary on the modern condition. Abaza's and Stauth's overriding critique of the literature as a search for authenticity emphasizes the defensiveness of the proponents of reconstruction and largely dismisses the dialogical possibilities of this engagement.

According to Abaza and Stauth, respectively, the defensive posture by Muslim proponents of reconstruction leads, then, to what Stauth (1988), in collaboration with Bryan Turner, elsewhere describes as feelings of *ressentiment*. *Ressentiment*, a Nietzschean concept, refers to a generalized feeling of envy, resentment, and hatred for the world that is. Nietzsche argues that, while philosophy will accept the death of God, metaphysicians are still in search for the thing-in-itself. Nietzsche writes that, "to imagine another, more valuable world is an expression of hatred for a world that makes one suffer: the *ressentiment* of metaphysicians against actuality is here creative" (cited in Stauth and Turner 1988: 69). Among other things, Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment,* upon which Weber draws for his discussion of a pariah people, serves as a critique of weak men, whose sense of *ressentiment* is grounded in bad faith, in their unwillingness to face the world as it is (Stauth and Turner 1988: 69). In embracing Nietzsche's immanent worldview that science is an attempt to humanize things as faithfully as possible (aphorism 112 in *The Gay Science* [(1974 [1887/1884]), both Stauth and Turner regard the attempt by Muslim intellectuals to reinstall metaphysics into the human sciences as an expression of *ressentiment* against the modern world. For Stauth, Turner, and Abaza, the quest for a reconstruction of knowledge is not a genuine, open dialogue with modernity but a search for identity, authenticity, and, above all, an expression of *ressentiment*.

Similarly, Turner (1985) regards the re-appropriation by Muslim intellectuals of Ibn Khaldun as a founder of the modern human sciences to be an expression of *ressentiment* against Western progress and Muslim decline. Turner points out that this nativist re-appropriation is simply a matter of playing the game of Orientalism in reverse; that is, such a re-appropriation merely attempts to find Muslim antecedents to all that is modern.[6]

Indeed, al-Azmeh (1981) also argues that prior to the European discovery, Ibn Khaldun's work had had little impact and that the very notion of the modernity of Ibn Khaldun is ahistoricist and anachronistic, and any attempt to view his *ilm al umran,* science of the social, in relation to the modern human sciences distorts the specificity and integrity both of Ibn Khaldun's science of the social and of the modern human sciences respectively. For al-Azmeh, Ibn Khaldun can have no meaning for contemporary readers, aside from the antiquarian interest in history, which is above all a marker of incommensurable difference. Any contemporary interest in Ibn Khaldun's work is,

according to al-Azmeh, clearly misplaced, since it has been initiated and motivated by Orientalism.

Is there no middle ground between relegating Ibn Khaldun's work to merely antiquarian interest and appropriating it in a blatantly nativist manner? Is there no possibility of overcoming the antipathy between Western modern critique and postcolonial *ressentiment*? In fact, Ibn Khaldun's work is crucial precisely because it represents an important nexus in the mediation of transcendent Islamic metaphysics and immanent human sciences and, thereby, allows us to overcome strong dualisms and all the preconceived ideas about the transcendent worldview of Islam and the immanent worldview of modernity. How is it possible that, in a medieval Islamic milieu supposedly defined by an otherworldly outlook, Ibn Khaldun was able to develop a theory so sharply focused on this-worldly causes and effects of history and the rise and fall of societies? In much of the secondary literature, the predominant answer to this question is that Ibn Khaldun was simply a rationalist, secular thinker who foreshadowed the development of modern thought, but concealed it under a guise of superficial religiosity. Hence, on this view, Ibn Khaldun did not, in fact, reconcile Islamic metaphysics with the demands of a rigorous, empirical science but pursued his rational and empirical science of the social, while merely paying lip service to the prevailing Asharite theological dogmatism. What has been almost entirely negated on this view is a holistic treatment of Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of knowledge. Rather than simply severing theology from science, and rationality from intuition, Ibn Khaldun integrates them by means of a holistic and hierarchical conception of the different orders of reality to which different kinds of knowledge correspond. To deal holistically with the question of social knowledge in Islam, we need to pay attention to Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of knowledge. Only then can we understand that Ibn Khaldun's hierarchical conceptions of different orders of reality and his views on Sufism and intuitive knowledge allowed him to reconcile and mediate the tension between a transcendent metaphysics and a this-worldly science of the social. Only then can we read Ibn Khaldun without misappropriating him as a modern social scientist *avant la lettre* or relegating him to antiquarian interest alone.

Social Theory as a Translation Service

Is it possible for Muslim scholars to overcome *ressentiment*? Is it possible for non-Muslim Western scholars to engage deeply with Muslim

attempts to re-enchant and re-construct knowledge without being dismissive of them? Even more broadly, one wonders if it is possible in academia after the postcolonial and postmodern moments, which coalesced in the wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) to displace the political and to deal with large-scale questions about culture, knowledge, and society using broad categories such as Islam, the West, and modernity? Since Said's postcolonial critique of Orientalism dovetailed with postmodernism's critiques of unitary, totalizing thought, thinking in broad terms about Islam and modernity has come to be regarded as an illegitimate endeavor trapped in the discursive power relations of Orientalism and its reverse, Occidentalism. But is it not possible to step outside of discursive power relations, even if only partially, and to think broadly and dialogically about Islam and modernity, and without regarding these categories as unchanging monolithic structures that predetermine our thought?

Thinking broadly about Islam and modernity without prostrating before the political is made all the more difficult now because Samuel Huntington's (1996) attempt to bring culture into the study of politics in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Re-Making of World Order* seems to confirm the view that broad thinking can give rise to nothing but stereotypical generalizations about the essentialist nature of the Orient and the Occident. Similarly, Benjamin Barber's (1995) *Jihad versus McWorld* and Bernard Lewis's (2002) *What Went Wrong?* are but the usual suspects in a long list. While such works also set in motion a counter-call for a dialogue of civilizations (see, for instance, Tehranian and Chappell 2002), above all, Huntington's self-fulfilling pronouncement of a clash of civilizations more than adequately exemplifies the dangers in broad, totalizing thinking.

Whereas the great error of the field of Orientalism, as perhaps of the human sciences in general for much of the second half of the twentieth century (see, e.g., Manent 1998 [1994]: 64), was to treat societies, cultures, and civilizations as closed and essentially incomparable wholes, the anti-essentialist response to it has been a refusal of broad categories altogether. The coalescing of the postmodern and postcolonial moments has led some scholars to adopt a strong anti-essentialist position that denies any form of holism. Aziz al-Azmeh's (1993) *Islams and Modernities* is simply the most aptly titled work of an anti-essentialist current of scholarship that has come to predominate in the human sciences. But does one need to resort to an extreme anti-essentialist position in order to avoid regarding Islam and modernity as homogenous monoliths? This refusal of holism, which claims to

free up thought from the illusions of totality, itself mirrors the dogma that it wishes to overcome, as Marcel Gauchet (1997 [1985]) points out. While there is much in his historicist account of religion with which I disagree, I do agree with Gauchet that the refusal of "a global orientation on behalf of smallness, plurality, and marginality, accompanied by the proliferation of specializations and the bureaucratic explosion of scholarship" does not necessarily render the Other more accessible and understandable. It may, in fact, serve only to further mystify the Other by highlighting the Other's internal indeterminacy, differences, and heterogeneity (Gauchet 1997 [1985]: 17). As Gauchet argues, the overall understanding of things does not increase by systematically accumulating minutiae.

Although most scholars, who are themselves rooted in cultural traditions, desire mutual recognition and coexistence (leave alone the problem of the extremists who do not desire this), in academia, at least, intercultural dialogue is pre-empted in many ways. Genuine dialogue is pre-empted in the first instance by scholars who, in the name of specialization, excuse themselves from intercultural conversations because, being too busy to partake in all conversations, they seek leave to return to the conversations of their tribes in which the language games have already been chosen, the concepts and terms already have been defined, and the main discussants already have been acknowledged. Similarly, in the name of busyness and specialization, genuine dialogue and understanding is also pre-empted by assuming that one already knows what the Other has to say; that is, there is nothing new to say or hear.

While specialization threatens intercultural dialogical understanding through sheer neglect of comparative work, perhaps the most frequent pre-emption of dialogue in the human sciences occurs in the name of critique. That is, dialogical understanding is altogether bypassed because the truth-claims of the Other are regarded as simply an ideological cover or, at best, a red-herring, behind which lie true motivations and real interests, which can only be uncovered by the critical eyes of the discerning objective scholar.

Perhaps part of the problem is that in the post-Enlightenment history of the human sciences the goal of critique has been recognized easily enough: from one's privileged access to Truth, critique seeks to enlighten the Other. The goal of dialogue, however, has never been as easily recognized. Does dialogical understanding aspire to a "fusion of horizons" between a self and an Other, as suggested by the hermeneutic philosopher Gadamer in his magnum opus *Truth and Method*

(1982 [1960])? For Gadamer, dialogical understanding is more than a method or epistemology; it is the universal, natural mode of human beings, who, even in their solitary thoughts, are engaging dialogically with others. If the Gadamerian ideal of a never-ending dialogue and a "fusion of horizons" is too much to hope for between Islam and secular-cultural modernity, might one be content in this dialogue with a better appreciation of the distance separating respective positions? In the human sciences it has not been clear whether the goal of dialogical understanding is a greater appreciation of the complexity and subtlety of the Other's position or a concern with greater self-clarification.

Since the end of a dialogue is not a matter of prediction but of discovery, perhaps each of these is a possible outcome of dialogical understanding and none of these should be confirmed or rejected from the outset. The sole requisite from the outset is a willingness to soften the critical edge and to be open to dialogue.

Although Marxist and other currents of positivist human science have rejected dialogical understanding,[7] recent forms of interpretive analysis, such as deconstruction or discourse analysis, also pre-empt dialogical understanding because they suggest that what really needs attention is what the Other is not-saying and is not-thinking or that the context of all conversations is governed by relations of power and a discursive struggle for hegemony, concealing the will-to-power.

While there may be some fractures in the history of a cultural tradition, as well as moments of critique and silence, the overriding motif in my argument is self- and mutual-understanding through dialogue. In *Islamic Liberalism*(1988) Leonard Binder points out that although a dialogical framework may be threatened, on the one hand, by Islamic revivalism that rejects Western liberal pretensions (*cf.* Sayyid 1997) and, on the other hand, by "Western intellectuals [who] read very little of what Muslim intellectuals write[,] insofar as [Muslim] thinkers explore Western ideas and confront them with the hegemonic forms of Muslim thought, they carry out the dialogue in their works" (Binder 1988: 9). Similarly, in his critique of Arab-Islamic thought, the Moroccan philosopher Mohammed Abed al-Jabri has argued that an important stage in the search for self-understanding is the reclamation or re-appropriation of a cultural legacy. Hence, he argues that contemporary Muslims may indeed engage dialogically with Ibn Khaldun, but they must do so with the recognition that this dialogue has been interrupted, nay ruptured, by modernity. In contrast to al-Azmeh and Turner, Abed al-Jabri points to the necessity

of reclaiming Ibn Khaldun's work so that Muslims may resuscitate, albeit in discontinuous fashion, the rationalist philosophical tradition that is part of their legacy. Abed al-Jabri is alert to the dangers of nativism that go along with such reclamations, and he warns of the tendency among Arab and Muslim scholars to be overwhelmed by their historical legacy. What is needed, he avers, is not an "objective" reading of Ibn Khaldun, for objectivity for its own sake is not the final goal, but an intra-cultural dialogical reading in which there is space for critique, thereby making the classical Islamic legacy alive and contemporary for Muslims.

Notwithstanding my hesitation with the radical anti-essentialism of postmodern thought, the hermeneutic dialogical engagement that I am disclosing in this book comes close to what Zygmunt Bauman (1988) and Barry Smart (1996: 423–24) regard as the task of postmodern social theory: to act as a "translation service," a means to nurture dialogue and understanding between a plurality of different, and at times radically different, traditions and communities. A dialogical framework assumes that disparate cultures are not always radically incommensurate, and that they are in conversation with each other, even in the face of serious moral, philosophical, and political disagreements (Euben 1999). For example, such disagreements may be rooted in opposing views on the place of metaphysics in scientific knowledge and of the priority of political values over non-political values, as the *Ijmali* theorist Manzoor (2001: 6) points out. Despite such differences or, better, because of them, a dialogical comparative framework is more necessary than ever since, as Gadamer writes, it is only collisions with Others' horizons that make us aware of our most deep-seated assumptions. Despite the problems of Eurocentrism, classical social theorists understood very well the importance of the comparative perspective, as, for example, even in Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, which sought to expose the unreasonableness of the ways of his own culture (Bakhtin 1981: 164). Similarly, the French anthropologist Louis Dumont, in his highly controversial book *Homo Hierarchicus*: *The Caste System and Its Implications* (1980 [1970]), reminds us that for self-revelation and self-critique, one needs the Other because one cannot adequately critique one's own reference point from within. Critique using one's own reference point is, Dumont says, like moving a mass from within when what is needed is an external fulcrum. Almost from its inception as a means to retrieve the original meaning of the Bible, the hermeneutic tradition has been concerned with dialogue, explicitly in Dilthey's brief ideas on the

relation between the *I* and the *Thou*, and in its fullest expression in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics.

I realize that the dialogical approach that I am taking risks legitimizing the classical Orientalist enterprise, for it, too, portrayed itself as a dialogue rooted in the philological concern with the preservation of traditions in foundational texts. Yet, the Orientalist encounter with the Muslim Other did not, and could not, live up to the dialogical ideal of taking the Other's truth-claims seriously, because, in its historicist interpretation of texts and in its claims to being a *scientific* discipline, it denied *a priori* Islamic metaphysics. It is exactly the philological, historicist understanding of Islam, and more particularly of the Quran, that has been criticized by Muslims, who argue that, although the Quran and the Bible are both dealing with sacred history, the Quran, unlike the Bible, is not primarily a book of history that must be ordered and combined chronologically so as to reveal the inner relations of its narratives (*cf.* Dilthey's discussion of philology in Rickman 1961: 142). According to Muslims, while it was revealed in a particular time and space, the metaphysical, eternal, Quranic message is not made clearer by a chronological ordering. The inner relations of the Quran that would make its eternal essential message clearer are not necessarily those which seem to make most sense to the modern human sciences, which generally eschew the religious, that is to say, the sacred and transcendent place of religion.

Hermeneutic dialogue, if it is to be genuine, requires that scholars of the human sciences not simply dismiss out of hand Islamic metaphysics as mere speculation or as the residue of a premodern and, hence, unenlightened, past, because the human sciences are themselves unable to escape the metaphysical need, as the works of Dilthey and Weber attest. The corollary of this is that hermeneutic dialogue requires that Muslims not simply dismiss the immanent metaphysics of the human sciences as inevitably leading to nihilism. If the threat of nihilism is present, Muslims would do well to point it out, but it behooves them also to recognize that an immanent metaphysics has led the human sciences to lay bare the extent to which social reality is not naturally preordained but is malleable and can be ameliorated.

Structure of the Book

In Chapter 1, I continue my elaboration on dialogue as a viable option in the human sciences, in contrast to other critical and interpretive

approaches. I draw upon Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and compare it to other interpretive endeavors, such as Foucauldian discourse analysis, as found in the work of Abaza, and deconstruction, as found in the work of Mohammed Arkoun, highlighting the closure of religious metaphysics that is presupposed in these latter forms of intercultural interpretation. I begin with Gadamer because he regards dialogical understanding not simply as a particular method of the human sciences but as the ontological condition of human beings. After defending hermeneutic dialogue as a better option than other interpretive and critical approaches in the human sciences, I turn to the interreligious model of dialogue to extrapolate its notion of silence as a valid form of suspicion and critique within dialogical understanding.

Part II examines the Islamic side of the dialogical encounter. Chapter 2 focuses on the contemporary Muslim debate on modern knowledge. I situate this debate in social and political developments, which gave rise to a new current of critical Muslim intellectuals over the course of the twentieth century, and I review some of the reformist and neo-revivalist Muslim currents. However, as I indicated above, my focus is on the philosophical underpinnings of the debate rather than its political context. I examine al-Faruqi's Islamization of Knowledge project, Sardar and Manzoor's *Ijmali* critique, and other internal and external critiques of the project. I also examine Nasr's traditionalist critique of modern knowledge, which is the most trenchant but also the most encompassing and conceptually compelling. The review of this literature discloses the important point that, contrary to Orientalist readings, even within Islam there is some play between otherworldly transcendence and this-worldly immanence. Moreover, I argue that both proponents and critics of reconstruction fail to realize that the debate exists in an implicit, if not explicit, dialogical relation with critiques of modern knowledge internal to the West. Although the dialogical relation is clouded by *ressentiment* and counter-*ressentiment*, the debate raises important questions about the role of metaphysics in the human sciences.

As I have indicated, Ibn Khaldun's work represents a crucial nexus in the dialogue between Islam and modernity. I have attempted in this Introduction to deal briefly with the issue of appropriating and misappropriating his work, and of how contemporary Muslims may read it dialogically. I resume this discussion in Chapter 3; however, the bulk of the chapter is devoted to analyzing Ibn Khaldun's ontological and epistemological presuppositions, which made possible the development of a realist, empirical theory of the rise and fall of societies within

the framework of a religious and hierarchical metaphysics. Thus, Ibn Khaldun's work puts in question our conventional ideas that the scientific study of society can only arise once religion is dispensed with, and I very briefly draw upon Georg Simmel's *The Problems of the Philosophy of History* (1977 [1905]) to shed light on this. What is ironic about Ibn Khaldun's work is that his hierarchical framework gives rise to a theory in which believers and non-believers are recognized as socially equivalent, because both are prone to the vicissitudes of the rise and fall of societies. I infer from Ibn Khaldun's theory of *asabiya,* social cohesion, that although there may be an ontological difference between believers and disbelievers at the spiritual level, it is their social equivalence in the earthly realm that warrants dialogical understanding.

Part III shifts the focus to Western developments in the human sciences. I examine Dilthey's hermeneutic and Weber's *verstehende* conception of the human sciences, because I wish partly to avoid the excessive and now out-dated focus by Muslim intellectuals on positivist conceptions of knowledge. Chapter 4 demonstrates that, although Dilthey accepts the closure of metaphysics as the new reality in which the production of knowledge must take place, he keeps reviving an immanent transcendence in his philosophy of the human sciences, because holism and teleology are re-constituted in nonreligious—for example, secular hermeneutic—terms. Chapter 4 fits neatly with the previous one on Ibn Khaldun, because both Ibn Khaldun and Dilthey struggle with limiting, though never fully closing, the influence of metaphysics in the empirical analysis of society and culture. Dilthey's demarcation of the human sciences as ontologically different from the natural sciences and his view on the persistence of the metaphysical mood open a wide space for dialogue with Ibn Khaldun, and if there is a possibility for a Gadamerian "fusion of horizons" in this book, it is in Chapters 3 and 4.

Whereas these two chapters indicate the space for dialogue, Chapter 5 points to the necessity of also recognizing silence in every dialogical encounter. This chapter examines Weber's philosophy of the human sciences, in particular his epistemological and methodological insistence on the social sciences as concrete empirical sciences, and I argue that Weber's resolute insistence on the concrete, empirical basis of these sciences, even while he recognizes the meaninglessness of such a foundation for knowledge, drastically reduces the scope for dialogue with Muslim social thought. Though Weber regards science as part of "an ethic of responsibility," for him, science is ultimately a Sisyphean activity, since it can provide no overarching meaning to the

world. Although, like Dilthey, Weber also resorts to what he calls an "organic metaphysics," Weber's belated search for an immanent this-worldly transcendence leaves religious believers, as well as those who, like Leo Strauss, espouse the ancient philosophy of Natural Right, with a sense of having been given too little meaning, too late.

Although it would certainly be more climactic to have the chapter on Weber precede the chapter on Dilthey in order to leave the possibilities for dialogue until the final chapter, I have presented them in the current order precisely because I wish to emphasize the dialogical possibilities between Ibn Khaldun and Dilthey as closely as possible, and to emphasize the closure of this possibility as we turn to Weber.

I conclude by going back to the dialogical basis of this comparative analysis. I suggest that a strong dialogue between Islamic and modern conceptions of human science is possible but will require strengthening the holistic currents of hermeneutic thought that currently prevail in the human sciences. No doubt, there are real dangers in thinking holistically, and yet, if such thinking is done well, the risks are worth it, because the human need for meaning cannot be satisfied by refusing holism and embracing fragmentation and specializations. As the Communitarian philosopher Charles Taylor (1997: ix) points out in the Foreword to the English translation of Gauchet's work, we can easily recognize how fragile large theories are, but we also need to recognize that theoretical work on a large scale is necessary, if only to define our views precisely; otherwise, we will be like "dwarfs who have forgotten to climb on the shoulders of giants." The anti-foundationalism and post-metaphysical stance of much work in the human sciences are leading us to a world dominated by technique and procedure. Holistic forms of thought rooted in integrating frameworks, such as hermeneutics, provide the best means of escaping this bleak future. If that is the challenge for Western social thought, the challenge for Muslim social thought is that the inefficacy of hierarchical thought to persuade postmodern minds means that Muslim scholars must embrace the holism of the hermeneutic circle and the power of interpretation. But bereft of a hierarchical integration of different orders of reality and their corresponding knowledges, this is sure to be problematic for them, since overemphasizing the place of human mediation in interpreting the Divine message has led many of the *ulama* to level charges of apostasy.

1

Critique and Dialogical Understanding

Civilizational Dialogue

Was it more than coincidence that the attacks of 9/11 occurred in the year 2001, which the UN had declared the *Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations*? 9/11 is all the more ironic, since the UN declaration had been suggested by Iranian President Mohammad Khatami as a response to the "clash of civilizations" thesis. Subsequently, America's largely unilateral behavior seemed to confirm the worst fears that Huntington's (1996) thesis had aroused.[1] And yet parallel to the predictable xenophobic reaction, there has also been a deeper interest in Islam and Muslims, whom the Western lay public finally perceived, for better or worse, as already in their midst. In spite, or perhaps because, of these developments on the world's stage, for much of the lay public, intercultural and interreligious dialogue appears to be the only viable antidote to the poison of religious and political extremism fed by cultural misunderstanding.

In contrast, in Western academia, dialogical understanding of Muslims and Islam has largely been eschewed. From the Orientalist study of Islam to the Marxist critique of bourgeois knowledge, from the field of Area Studies to poststructuralist theorizing, engaging with the Muslim Other has largely been a process of revealing to the West *and to Muslims themselves* the truth that lies hidden behind a cloud of myths and illusions. Since the 1970s, Western academic interest has shifted from relatively humanistic fields to *explaining* Islamic fundamentalism, the emergence of which had been completely unforeseen by secular academics. What has gone largely unremarked in this shift from a perspective informed by the humanities to one informed more by the social sciences is the slippage that occurs by

shifting from a focus on the fundamentals of Islam to Islamic fundamentalism (Robertson 1992). The elision of fundamentals and fundamentalism leaves the impression that the two are one and the same. Yet, the long *durée* of all major religions has shown that adherence to fundamentals does not necessarily lead to an activation of extremist and violent interpretations. Most regrettably, increasingly, the interpretive hermeneutic perspective of the humanities has given way to conventional explanatory accounts from the social sciences, which typically emphasize the disruption of traditional identities and cultures, owing to modernization, industrialization, urbanization, secularization, and heightened class interests associated with the sudden prosperity from petro-dollars.

However, these explanatory social scientific accounts, rooted in the Enlightenment tradition of the critique of ideology, are limited in a few ways. First, they implicitly regard the history of the West as a universal trajectory of development. Second, they view all interests as related to economic interests, even though the primacy given to economic interests may just be a particularity of modern *homo economicus* (Dumont 1977), and explanatory models that resort to "interest articulation" and "interest aggregation" are defined by the bargaining culture of Western civilization and so they may not be appropriate elsewhere (C. Taylor 1985 [1971]: 42). Third, *even if* such explanatory accounts shed some light on how political Islam became a more viable option with the decline of liberal, socialist, and nationalist options, these accounts amount only to a *description* of certain processes in Muslim societies rather than to a necessary and sufficient explanation of why many Muslims are *actively choosing* Islamism as the option they wish to pursue (Sayyid 1997). Hence, Western accounts that seek to *explain* Islamic fundamentalism often distort our understanding because post-Enlightenment, rationalist discourse almost reflexively dismisses "Other" ideals as being ideological and epiphenomenal to concrete material factors (Euben 1999). And yet the same sort of analysis is rarely conducted with respect to Marxist, liberal, or democratic ideals. That is, these ideas and ideals are rarely ever regarded as the result of socio-economic factors alone. Hence, despite 20 years of attention, the attempt of Western theory to account for Islamic fundamentalism suffers not "from a dearth of critique, but from a paucity of insight," because it fails to understand the appeals of fundamentalism for its practitioners (Euben 1999: 15). Instead of dismissing "Other" ideals, it is even more

necessary to employ interpretive approaches to better understand them. No doubt, dialogical models are susceptible to distortions of power, but explanatory models may be even more susceptible to such distortions , because, as alluded to by Dumont and Taylor, the reduction of all interests to economic interests may be a particularity of modern Western civilization.

In some ways, explanatory critical accounts of Islam and Muslim societies have partially been offset by theorizing about the "Other" in poststructuralist, postmodernist, and postcolonial currents, each of which, in its own way, has sought to privilege a disrupted, decentered, fragmented, and marginalized Other. Yet the strong anti-essentialist and secular presuppositions of the scholars who work in these currents have prevented them from genuinely opening up to a *dialogical* framework for understanding the relationship between Islam and modernity. As I will argue later in this chapter, poststructuralism's disdain for the agent's self-interpretation turns out not to be very different from the critical Marxist search for an objective truth free from ideology. I have in mind not only the strong poststructuralism of Foucauldian discourse analysis but also Derridean deconstruction. It is not for nothing that Gayatri Spivak, whose work sits at the intersection of deconstruction and Marxist feminism, answers her own question, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) in the negative, even if she does so somewhat ironically.

To respond to Said's critique of Orientalism—that it presents Islam as homogenous and unchanging—and also to counter the idealized Muslim claim of the unity of the *ummah* (the global community of believers), anti-essentialist scholars (e.g., al-Azmeh 1993; Eickleman and Piscatori 1990) present Islam and the West (or modernity) as constantly evolving, decentered, de-essentialized, and empirically diverse (Sayyid 1997). It is true that the Orientalist essentialization of Islam abetted the exertion of control over the Muslim Other (Salvatore 1997: 70). It is also true that, in many periods of history, Muslim political and religious leaders have regarded internal segmentation and differentiation as sources of *fitna* (moral and social chaos), the fear of which has been used as a threat to quash dissent and to claim the unity of the *ummah*. However, on the one hand, Islam is neither monolithic and unchanging, as the Orientalists posit, nor an undifferentiated unity, as many of the faithful wish to believe. But on the other hand, neither does Islam simply dissolve into a plurality of local Islams devoid of any civilizational content.

Islam and Modernity as Civilizational Spheres

Conceiving of Islam as a civilization does not *necessarily* amount to treating it as a monolithic, unchanging entity. Rather, as Ahmet Karamustafa (2003) argues, Islam is an open, dynamic, holistic civilizational project that receives its direction from the human agents—individual and collective—that comprise it. True, agency resides not in reified entities such as civilizations but in the hands of groups of human actors. Nevertheless, Islam is a supra-cultural package of values, practices, and resources that Muslims adopt to help them navigate their earthly life. The holism of Islamic civilization is, thus, to be found in the commitment of Muslims to a shared stock of ideals and key ideas and their willingness to express these in a shared idiom. Karamustafa reminds us that it is important not to reify the key ideas and practices into a rigid formula, such as the overly simplistic five pillars of faith.[2] Rather, we must recognize that the key ideas of monotheism, prophecy, genesis, and eschatology underwrite a set of values—about the dignity of human life, individual and collective rights and duties, and the necessity of ethical action—that are reflected in concrete human acts, which range from the necessity of greeting someone to acts of prayer, fasting, etcetera. These key ideas and practices are believed to be contained in the fundamental sources, the Quran and the life of Muhammad. "It is a version of this core that lies at the heart of the centre of each and every one of the innumerable manifestations of the Islamic civilizational tradition in human history" (Karamustafa 2003: 109). Acknowledging the legitimacy of sectarian, or other local, cultural variations in the fold of Islam does not invalidate the holism of Muslim civilizations, because Islam exists in and above cultures, though it may be more proper to speak of an "Islamic civilizational sphere with numerous distinct cultural regions instead of a single, uniform Islamic civilization with an unchanging cultural kernel" (Karamustafa 2003: 105).

Despite the multiplicity of Islamic discourses and despite their polysemic origins, there remains not an undifferentiated unity but a holism to those discourses, which, although dismissed by anti-essentialist theorists, remains palpable for believers (Sayyid 1997). To do away with any holistic conception of Islam goes too far, because it misses the point that the problem is not holism per se, but the reductionistic and exclusivistic version of Islam that Islamists use for their own ends.

Similarly, while the modern West may equally be divided by its own tribal and linguistic divisions, certain fundamental shared experiences and convictions provide the ties that bind the West into a meaningfully holistic category. According to the Canadian philosopher John Raulston Saul (1993 [1992]), author of *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West,* it is not just the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian foundations that define the West. Rather, over the past half-millennium, a series of trials and crises, such as the Reformation, the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, and other democratic revolutionary crises, turned into basic assumptions, which have been grouped under the banner of Reason. We do not need to agree with Saul that the only decisive and consistent movement of the past 500 years has been away from Divine revelation and the absolute power of the Church and state, to accept the gist of his point: that the modern West may be treated holistically, even if not as a unity. What Saul is alluding to is that the experience of modernity encompasses myriad cognitive and social transformations. Among social transformations, one may enumerate the following: the emergence and institutionalization of market-driven industrial economies, bureaucratically administered states, modes of popular government, rule of law, mass media, and increased mobility, literacy, urbanization, etcetera (Gaonkar 2001: 2). But aside from these social transformations, with which the political imaginary has become obsessed, we need also to take greater account of the cognitive transformations, which Saul groups under the banner of Reason; here one may enumerate the following: the growth of scientific consciousness, the development of a secular outlook, the doctrine of progress, the primacy of instrumental rationality, the fact-value split, individualistic understandings of the self, and contractualist understandings of society (Gaonkar 2001: 2). Similarly, Jürgen Habermas (1981) regards modernity above all as the attempt to reveal the eternal and immutable qualities of human life through the development of objective science, universal morality and law, and art. Indeed, the hope of Enlightenment thinkers was that the development of rational modes of thought and scientific knowledge—and consequently the domination of nature—would lead to human emancipation and liberation from the irrationalities of myth, religion, and superstition (Harvey 1989: 12).

What is slippery about this list of social and cognitive transformations is that they are rarely just neutral descriptions of the changes that took place in Europe over the past 500 years. What was once a largely *descriptive* account of the social and cognitive transformations

that first occurred in the West came to be regarded under the light of modernization theory as a largely normative prescription of change for the rest of the world (Featherstone 1991: 6). What modernization did, in effect, was to dissociate modernity from its European origins and present itself as an acultural model of social development for colonized societies (Houston 2001; C. Taylor 2001 [1995]). Modernization implied that the social transformations of modernity could take place without the requisite cognitive transformations. Habermas (1987a) is especially critical of such a position because he argues that it relativized the claims of modernity. He is convinced that it is impossible to sever the historical objectification of rational structures that occurred in Europe, and more generally in the West, from their social processes. Modernization without the requisite cognitive transformations assumes that while the "premises of the Enlightenment are dead, only their consequences live on" (Habermas 1987a: 3).

To conceive of Islam and modernity as civilizational spheres, rather than simply discursive political categories as per postcolonial or postmodern thought, is not to deny the historical interpenetration of Muslim and European societies. No one can legitimately deny the historical interpenetration of the Muslim world and the West. Yet one may accept mutual influences while also maintaining that each has a set of defining features, as Abdallah Laroui suggests when he writes of the process of complementarity. For Laroui (1987; 1997), dialogue between Islam and the West has taken the form of a process of complementarity through which the presence of the One has pushed the Other, in all its aspects, in directions that it would not have followed if the first did not exist. In effect, according to Laroui, dialogue over the long *durée* has entailed a process that has presided over the choices that have been made in theology (unity versus trinity), in metaphysics (transcendence versus immanence), in aesthetics (abstract versus figurative), etcetera. While these choices are now irreversible and take on the appearance of being eternal and inevitable, they were the result of a succession of events that were, to begin with, contingent. That certain elements may be shared, borrowed, passed on, or hybridized among civilizations does not tell us anything about the meaning that those particular elements take on within a given social order.

Hence, it is possible to have holistic conceptions of Islam and modernity without buying into the exclusivistic visions of Orientalists and Islamists alike. Similarly, emptying the categories of "Islam" and "modernity" of their civilizational content and reducing them always

to their myriad local manifestations not only does not obviate the tensions between them, it is not true to the way that Islam and modernity "have constituted themselves historically as intellectual traditions" (Salvatore 1997: xiii).

In contrast to explanatory models and poststructuralist theorizing,[3] I propose that reconstructed dialogical frameworks, drawing upon dialogical hermeneutics and interreligious dialogue, are the most suitable for comparative, cross-cultural understanding between Islam and modernity, because such frameworks do not treat traditions and ideals as merely ideological expressions of false consciousness nor do they dissolve Islam and the West into a plurality of local forms. As Euben (1999), Smart (1996) and Bauman (1988) have each pointed out, the task that confronts social theory is to provide a "translation service." Indeed, without buying into the easy optimism that is *de rigueur,* a dialogical framework would recognize that the world of Islam has from its inception been dialoguing with the spiritual forebears of Europe: the Jews, the Eastern Christians, and the ancient Greeks (Laroui 1987: 8).

It will be evident that the dialogical models, hermeneutic and interreligious dialogue, I employ in this chapter derive from Western sources. This is a fundamental issue for a comparative work that seeks a dialogue between Islam and modernity. I discuss the problem toward the end of this chapter. However, my admission is itself testimony to the lack of social theorizing in the Muslim world. The problem is not that dialogical models cannot be derived from Islamic sources and traditions. In fact, I think that the conceptual tools are present in classical Islamic sources, not least of which the Quran: S*urah al-Kafirun* (s. 109) and the Quranic concept of the *ahl-al-kitab* (People of the Book), could provide a strong basis for social theorizing on dialogue. As well, the role of silence and a temporary refusal of dialogue could potentially be theorized from the verses (4: 140; 6: 70) that command the believers to leave the company of hypocrites and disbelievers when the latter engage in defiance and derision and to return to their company when they turn to other topics.

There has been some re-theorizing (see, for example, Ramadan 1999; 2001) of the classical concepts of *dar-al-Islam* and *dar-al-harb* (the abode of peace and the abode of war, respectively), concepts that point to the failure of dialogue. As Ramadan's work attests, some Muslims, at least those in the West, are once again turning to a theology of pluralism that embraces dialogical possibilities (see, for example, Safi 2003; Masud 2004). However, the question legitimately

arises whether the impetus for a theology of pluralism comes from within the Muslim world or from without. I argue in this chapter that the possibility of re-activating pluralistic readings of classical Islamic sources exists, but, as Gadamer makes clear, it is only in collisions with Others' horizons that one becomes aware of one's own most deep-seated assumptions, which necessitates the re-activation of dialogue. The development of dialogical models from the Islamic tradition is an important issue, but it constitutes another project altogether, outside the scope of this book.

Ideology and Critique

Generally, the charge of ideology is often leveled to indicate that a truth-claim is mystifying, obscuring, or willfully concealing some other element of truth, and the charge is deeply rooted in the Enlightenment view that the task of scientific understanding is to distill "pure," objective knowledge free of distortions from "impure," prejudicial knowledge (Hekman 1986). The charge of ideology finds its archetypical expression in the classic Marxist view of the production of (a particular kind of) knowledge with specific class interests, interests which this knowledge conceals; hence, the Marxist critique of ideology attempts to reveal the true economic and political interests that are obfuscated by certain truth-claims.

Since at least the 1970s, the analysis of Muslim societies has been replete with such critical accounts that, while breaking with the classical Orientalist scholarship that regards the religion of Islam as the sole defining element of Muslim backwardness, continue to treat the self-knowledge of Muslims as mere ideology. Maxime Rodinson's (1974 [1966]) useful refutation of Weber's thesis of the "cluster of absences" in Islam[4] is itself marred by its denial of Muslim self-understanding. Since Rodinson has been highly influential for the subsequent study of Muslims and of Islamism, it is useful to quote him at some length:

> This book, by a sociologist specializing in Islamic studies, is written with the high ambition to be of service to intellectuals in the countries that belong to the Muslim faith and civilization, by helping them to understand their situation. It is not that I presume myself superior, by virtue of "being European," to the best among them in learning or intelligence. I lay claim to no advantage of that sort. It is merely that circumstances have enabled me to escape sooner than them from certain social impediments that obstruct their understanding of their own

> problems. I have had the good fortune to be given free access to acquisition of a knowledge of their past that is clear of myths, and I have sought to rid myself of the myths that are hindrances to understanding their present. (Rodinson 1974: vii)

More recently, Gilles Kepel (2002) is similarly suspicious of the motives and claims of Islamists and other Muslim intellectuals. Although he begins his study with a discussion of the "cultural revolution" in Muslim societies in the twentieth century, for Kepel the rise of Islamism can be attributed to the converging and diverging interests of three segments of society: (1) a young, urban generation; (2) a traditional bourgeoisie which descends from mercantilist families; and (3) the newer professionals and business people who became wealthy by working in the Gulf States but who were left out of the traditional power elite (Kepel 2002: 6). Hence, Kepel sees in the Islamist references to democracy and in their dialogues with secular democrats in the Muslim world nothing but "the yearning of the middle class and of a segment of the Islamist intelligentsia for an alliance with mainstream secular society whereby they can escape the trap of their own political logic" (Kepel 2002: 363). A little less Marxist and more Weberian, Olivier Roy (1994 [1992], 2004) similarly explains the rise of Islamism by its sociology, that is, by the emergence of new types of states, social classes, and ideologies. But Roy's analysis is more nuanced than Kepel's, because Roy at least *appears willing* to go down the dialogical path. For instance, he (1994: viii) claims that he is "taking at its word what Islamism says about Islam" and that he wants to take seriously the political and cultural imagination of the Islamists. Roy (1994: 7) acknowledges that doing so may risk accepting the essentialization of Islam "by the mere fact that we take at their word the arguments of the actors," yet it becomes clear very early in his work that he has a very narrow conception of dialogue, for he regards the political and cultural imagination of the Islamists as never directly explanatory (Roy 1994: viii). For all his dissimulating, Roy flatly rejects dialogical understanding:

> No matter what the actors say, any political action amounts to the automatic creation of a secular space or a return to the traditional segmentation…Our problem, then, is not to survey to what extent Islam allows for a secular space in its texts and age-old practice (*this would pose considerable problems of methodology and amounts to returning to the conceptual categories of those whom one is critiquing*), but

> to study a coherent ensemble, limited in time and space, of texts, practices and political organizations that deeply marked the political life of Muslim countries. (Roy 1994 [1992]: 23–24, emphasis added)

Discourse Analysis and the Critique of Power

As mentioned in the Introduction, explanatory-critical accounts of Islam have been partially offset by poststructuralist and postcolonial theorizing about the Other. Although there had been other works critical of the Orientalist tradition,[5] Said's (1978) classic text serves as a useful point of departure for these types of theorizing about Islam and its relationship to the West. As we know, Said argues that the possibility of a genuine understanding of the Islamic Other was lost as the Orientalist discursive formation about the Orient became more and more entrenched. In making this argument, Said draws upon Foucault's view that all knowledge or truth-claims are bound to power relations in a struggle for discursive hegemony. As an interpretive approach, Foucauldian discourse analysis posits that the analysis of epistemes, the systems of knowledge that construct their own objects of reference, must examine the configurations of power in which those epistemes are implicated. In his discussion of the modern legal-scientific episteme, Foucault (1980: 134; also cited in Spivak, 1988: 298) writes: "The episteme is the 'apparatus' which makes possible the separation not of the true from the false, but of what may not be characterized as scientific." Since *all* epistemes are implicated with power, Foucauldian discourse analysis repudiates the Enlightenment tradition of the critique of ideology and holds that discourses which do not acknowledge and testify to their own hegemonic position are especially prone to distortions of power. Indeed, ever since Said's influential critique of Orientalism, Foucauldian discourse analysis, in its archaeological (e.g., Binder, 1988) and genealogical (e.g., Salvatore, 1997) modes, has increasingly emerged as the theoretical and methodological alternative to hermeneutic dialogue or ideology-critique in analyses of Islam and modernity.

Perhaps this way of formulating the difference is not exactly correct, because those who employ Foucauldian discourse analysis consider it to be a form of dialogical understanding, one that is truer to the spirit of dialogue than the lopsided engagement by Orientalism. For instance, Binder (1988) views his own discourse analysis as an attempt to renew dialogue between Islam and the West, a dialogue that is threatened, on the one hand, by Muslim neo-revivalists who

turn their backs on the West and, on the other hand, by Western theorists and development specialists who talk only among themselves. Thus, despite some misgivings about Said's critique of Orientalism as a coercive discourse, Binder draws upon the archaeological mode of discourse analysis to reveal the conditions that made Islamic liberal discourse possible in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, for example in the work of Rashid Rida, hoping thereby to recreate such conditions in order to reactivate Islamic discourses. Along the same lines, Salvatore's (1997: xxii) genealogical approach to the discourses pertaining to political Islam and modernity also alludes to the dialogical character of discourse analysis, and he makes much use of concepts such as the hermeneutic circle and field. However, since the methodological orientation of his work is not purely exegetical (Salvatore 1997: xxi), he concedes that his study cannot properly be considered a hermeneutic dialogue (1997: xxiii). Salvatore's genealogical analysis, which seeks out multiple points of origin rather than a single point of origin of the discourses that portray Islam as inherently a political religion and modernity as subsuming transcendence into the political realm, not only aspires to a closer following of Foucault than Binder's study but also appears to be willing to problematize the modernist positioning of secularism as the normal state of affairs.

Although Binder and Salvatore both overcome the Orientalist framing of Islamic discourses, and thus engage in a "dialogue" that is sensitive to the unequal power relations between the Muslim world and the West, does not their incessant quest to reveal the historicity of particular discourses pre-emptively deny the metaphysics of the Islamic Other? That is to say, the privileging of historicity in discourse analysis over and above metaphysics, the attempt to reveal the groundedness of the Islamic Other's religious discourse in solely this-worldly considerations is tantamount to a refutation of the metaphysical mode of thought, and pre-emptively denies the right of the Other to hold onto metaphysics. Binder (1988: 121) himself appears to be aware of this when he writes, "the logical consequence of following Foucault is not just the dispersal of Man, but also the dispersal of Islam. The Divine Speech which Muslims believe is Islam, is, obviously, just another discursive formation with its own set of dominating metaphors, literary structures and interpretations of reason and order which are themselves textual and rhetorical." But if the Islamic Other insists on the transcendent source (i.e., guidance through revelation) of its considerations, does not discourse analysis, or for that

matter any approach that claims the status of a human *science*, preemptively dismiss such a notion as hopelessly pre-modern?

It is surprising, then, to find Pervez Manzoor (1990), who is otherwise a perceptive critic of historicist scholarship, accepting the Foucauldian discourse analysis version of dialogue. In a review of Binder's book, Manzoor (1990: 78) writes that the abusive dialogue between Orientalists and Muslims has given way to "a disciplined exercise in self-analysis that not only aims at reciprocal critique but earnestly seeks mutual self-enlightenment as well. At any rate, each protagonist now recognizes the validity of the other's position and even discovers in the plight of one's own tradition, the authentication of the other…The age of barren polemics between 'Islam' and 'Orientalism,' one feels, has come to an end." Manzoor makes no distinction between hermeneutic dialogue and other forms of interpretive engagement such as Foucauldian discourse analysis; hence, he (2001: 13) claims that Euben, Binder, and Salvatore each share the same focus and methods and reach the same conclusions. However, given that Manzoor is a trenchant critic of historicism who has elsewhere written that "the preoccupation with origins is the obverse of the search for meaning" (2003: 7; see also 1999), it is strange that Manzoor does not recognize the crucial difference between the search for understanding in hermeneutic dialogue and the quest for historicity in Foucauldian discourse analysis. By revealing the origins (archaeological) or the lines of descent (genealogical) of the Other's discursive formations and the power struggles at work in them, Foucauldian discourse analysis amounts once again to an *explanation* of the reasons for the Other's truth-claims. In effect, despite claims for the dialogical character of discourse analysis, it remains closely tied to the Enlightenment goal of demystification.

Gadamer's Dialogical Hermeneutics

As heir to the distinct traditions of Christian exegesis and the philology of ancient texts, hermeneutics was born in the attempt to rise above the particularity of the rules of interpretation; but even as it sought to synthesize these respective disciplinary traditions, Friedrich Schliermacher's Romantic hermeneutics remained firmly within the Enlightenment focus on epistemology, on the Kantian question, "How do we know?"(Ricoeur 1981 [1973]). Even Dilthey's concern with the ontological difference between nature and social reality attempted to

extend the Kantian epistemological question to the human sciences. Dilthey did raise the hermeneutic aspects of the relation between the *I* and the *Thou* but never made explicit the dialogic aspect of his work.

It is with Gadamer's (1976 [1966]) radical re-interpretation of hermeneutics that the process of dialogue becomes an ontological event, a universal feature of human understanding, in which the attempt to understand another tradition or culture is likened to the attempt to understand the meaning of an ancient text, because, in each case, there is an engagement between an interpreter and an Other. Gadamer argues that the search for understanding is always dialogical, because one is, in effect, always engaged in an implicit conversation with an Other. Hence, dialogue is universal.

Gadamer recognizes that hermeneutic understanding of the Other, as an ontological event, is never entirely free of the surrounding context, because both the Self and the Other are deeply rooted in effective-historical traditions, which act as constraints, in the sense that they impose "horizons" on our understanding. For Gadamer, people experience the world like a language, as pre-configured, pre-interpreted. Experiences, in so far as people seek to understand and give voice to them, are pre-schematized, because people must draw upon pre-existing language to express their experiences. People's interpretation and understanding of the world is, thus, always language bound and tied to a linguistic tradition. However, and crucially, these limits, these horizons of understanding, are never fixed but shift as one's understanding of things itself shifts.

If the Self is always entangled in one's own tradition and thereby constrained by one's horizons, albeit horizons that shift, is it possible, then, to engage in meaningful dialogue with interlocutors from different or radically different traditions? For Gadamer, there is no alienation rendering two traditions radically incomparable, because the learning of one's own tradition provides "the grammar" from which we may come to learn and understand other traditions (Euben, 1999). Gadamer (1982: xx) writes: "Only the support of the familiar and common understanding makes possible the venture into the alien, the lifting up of something out of the alien, and thus the broadening and enrichment of our own experiences of the world." Hence, the effective-historical tradition in which one is immersed does not solely constrain understanding but also enables the understanding of new encounters, because it is through our prior biases and prejudices that we are able to make sense of new encounters.

For Gadamer, productive dialogical understanding is, thus, an intersubjective "fusion of horizons," which is transformative for both the Self and the Other, because one takes seriously the truth-claims of the Other, as well as being aware of the prejudices of one's own tradition. Gadamer (1982 [1960]: xxi, emphasis added) writes:

> It is precisely in confronting the otherness of the text—in hearing its challenging viewpoint—and not in preliminary methodological self-purgation, that the reader's own prejudices (i.e., his present horizons) are thrown into relief and thus come to critical self-consciousness. *The hermeneutic phenomenon is at work in the history of cultures as well as individuals, for it is in times of intense contact with other cultures (Greece with Persia or Latin Europe with Islam) that a people becomes most acutely aware of the limits and questionableness of its deepest assumptions.* Collisions with other's horizons make us aware of assumptions so deep seated that they would otherwise remain unnoticed.

Since we cannot entirely escape the limits of our own effective-historical tradition, a genuine and fair dialogue is one in which we remain open to Other voices, all the while accepting the limits that their traditions impose on them.

In order to further flesh out important nuances of Gadamer's view of dialogical understanding, it will be useful to contrast it with the view of dialogue that emerges in the work of the Russian literary critic and linguistic theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. It is not my intention in this brief comparison to engage in an in-depth analysis of Bakhtin's work. Rather, I wish only to bring out their differences with respect to the issues of essentialism and holism, on the one hand, and plurality, heterogeneity, and fragmentation, on the other.

Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogue is rooted in his view that the modern novel is more than simply a new, modern literary form that emerges in the late nineteenth century. For Bakhtin, the novel is a force that reveals the limits, the artificial constraints, of a system, because the novel thrives on diversity, on heteroglossia, on a "living mix of varied and opposing voices," which are purged in literary forms such as epic, myth, and other traditional narratives that carry a presumption of authority, a claim to an absolute unified language. According to Bakhtin, unlike these latter forms of literature, the novel is anti-canonical, because it will not permit a monologue. In a novel, no single voice predominates; rather, the novel represents the multiplicity of voices that impinge on a character or even on the reader.

Like Gadamer, Bakhtin (1981: 273) emphasizes the "dialogic nature of language" and regards the task of interpreting a text like a form of dialogue in which one adds one's own words to the words of others. And, again like Gadamer, for Bakhtin nothing is a self-sufficient unity constituting a closed system. Although there are always, and in every culture, centripetal forces or worldviews that posit the ideal of self-contained unity, there are no incommensurable languages, discourses, or conversations, because it is impossible to lock the meaning of words into a single context. Hence, Gadamer and Bakhtin concur that the Self is *a priori* a dialogical self.

It is these centripetal forces that, much like Gadamer's "horizons," limit and constrain the potential chaos of variety and also enable some amount of mutual understanding. What distinguishes Bakhtin's "dialogical imagination" from Gadamer's hermeneutic dialogue is Bakhtin's radical view of the Self, for Bakhtin regards any notion of unity as rooted in ideology. However, whereas Gadamer regards "horizons" and limits as authentic and genuine constraints imposed by an effective-historical tradition, Bakhtin regards centripetal constraining worldviews as ideologically saturated, completely enmeshed in sociopolitical and cultural attempts at centralization. Thus, for Bakhtin, the search for understanding does not amount to a "fusion of horizons" but to an overcoming of the ideological tendency to view the Self as fully unified and coherent, an acknowledgment that any conception of a unified and coherent self is ideological (Bakhtin 1981: 272).

Perhaps the difference between them can be summarized in their views on social order and social change. Bakhtin writes that centripetal forces are simply ideological because the "orientation toward unity concentrates attention in the most stable, least changeable, mono-static aspects of discourse, which are furthest removed from the actual, changing socio-semantic fields of discourse" (Bakhtin 1981: 274). In contrast, Gadamer holds the orientation toward change in check because of its neglect of the persistence of an order in the world. He (1982 [1960: xxiv) writes:

> Things that change force themselves on our attention far more than those that remain the same. That is a general law of our intellectual life. Hence, the perspectives that result from the experience of historical change are always in danger of being exaggerated because they forget what persists unseen.

Recently, some Bakhtinian scholars (see the collection of essays in Bell and Gardiner 1998) have argued that Bakhtin's "dialogical imagination" provides the basis for a dialogical ethics that can overcome the problem of radical difference in a globalized world more and more aware of such differences, but a world that also thirsts for common understanding. For instance, Bell and Gardiner draw upon Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia to posit the notion of "radical tolerance," which aims at mutual recognition and mutual understanding. According to Bell and Gardiner, radical tolerance requires not merely putting up with multiple worldviews, each in their discrete and incommensurate form of life, but a genuine opening up to diverse points of view, a willingness to modify one's point of view through dialogical engagement with the Other. At the same time, Bell and Gardiner maintain that Bakhtin's dual emphasis on radical diversity of the Self and the ideological claim to unity means that a dialogical ethics for intercultural encounters need not renounce ideological criticism nor give up a quest for utopian alternatives.

A model of inter-civilizational dialogue premised on Bakhtinian analysis is a welcome contribution to the human sciences. Ultimately, however, in comparison to Gadamerian hermeneutics, I find that the Bakhtinian model falls short because it regards *all* claims to unity as ideological. Although the intentions of Bakhtinian scholars to develop a cross-cultural dialogical ethics out of linguistic and literary analysis is admirable, an adequate response to intercultural difference does not need a full-blown version of anti-essentialism, heteroglossia, fluidity, and change. An adequate response to communal violence can recognize communitarian claims of not unity but holism, and it can do so in ways that do not lead to raising the charge of ideology or to falling prey to the dangers of exclusivism. Maintaining the authenticity, wholeness, and integrity of a tradition does not necessarily lead to excluding, dismissing, or destroying Other traditions. Why are radical alterity, plurality, heterogeneity, fluidity, and social change regarded as somehow more genuine and authentic than the constraints, limits, and claims to unity? Are not both sets of processes equally genuine? For this reason, I find much more compelling Gadamer's hermeneutic model of dialogue, his view of Self and Other that can transcend previous horizons without regarding the limiting, constraining, coalescing horizons as ideological. Because Gadamer's view of dialogue recognizes the persistence and authentic holism of effective-historical traditions, it is far more compelling for intercultural understanding.

Having assumed the interpretive task of dialogical understanding, we are then confronted with the question of whether critique, threatening almost always to impose itself before the Other has had a fair say, interferes with the dialogical task. If so, then what form of critique is compatible with dialogical understanding?

Habermas's Critical Theory

While its roots are clearly in classical Marxism, Habermas's Critical Theory has been referred to as "the modern, post-Marxist expression of the critique of ideology" (Ricoeur, 1981 [1973]: 90), because it appropriates Gadamer's insistence on the centrality of dialogue and the hermeneutic elaboration of meaning as one of the three interests—the instrumental, the hermeneutic, and the critical-emancipatory—underlying the human sciences (Habermas 1972 [1968]: 301–317).

Initially, Habermas's overriding emphasis on the critical-emancipatory interest led him almost always to speak of a "controlled distancing" [*Verfremdung*] (1988 [1970: 166) within and between traditions, and he seems to have suggested that, if one did not step outside of one's tradition through critical reflection and a controlled distancing, a fusion of horizons with another could exist, if at all, only in a framework of coercive tradition.[6]

Since then, Habermas has come much closer to Gadamer's position.[7] Habermas's elaboration of communicative action and intersubjectivity reflects his indebtedness to Gadamer's view that there is no objective critique possible, no critique outside of a particular tradition (Habermas 1992 [1988]: 137–39),[8] since Habermas concedes that "communicative action depends on the use of language oriented to mutual understanding" (Habermas 1996 [1992]: 18). Making use of natural language in order to come to an understanding with an addressee requires one to take a performative attitude and to commit oneself to certain presuppositions (Habermas 1996 [1992]: 4). Since Habermas gives less emphasis to his earlier terminology of a "controlled distancing," and since communicative action mediates rational, critical social-scientific discourse and the *lifeworld* of ordinary language, he is now much more willing to remain open to both the normative self-understanding of the participant and the objectivating critique of the sociological observer. By attenuating objective critique outside of tradition, Habermas (1996 [1992]: 6–7) is now much more open to different methodological standpoints (participant versus

observer), different theoretical objectives (interpretive explication and conceptual analysis versus description and empirical explanation) and different roles and different performative attitudes of research (analytical, hermeneutic, critical-emancipatory).

Yet, in spite of this important shift from his original position, Habermas still holds onto theoretical distanciation of self-reflective thought, of breaking "with the naïve normativism of the participant" (Habermas 1996 [1992]: 9) and, most revealingly, even argues that "[c]ertainly, some cultures have had more practice in distancing themselves from themselves" (Habermas 1992 [1988]: 138). Although Habermas has taken a step back from his earliest critique of Gadamer that a "fusion of horizons" could only exist in a framework of coercive traditions, he still insists that "without the structures of a communicative situation free from distortion, the results [of attempts at understanding] are always under the suspicion of having been forced" (Habermas cited in Borradori 2003: 37).

While Habermas has been very influential in drawing attention to the hermeneutic task of the human sciences, there has been very little *direct* engagement of Critical Theory with intercultural dynamics (Vahdat 2003), which is ironic, since Habermas has been concerned with the "unfinished project of modernity," a project that has had ineluctable global implications. Instead, other thinkers have had to draw out the implications of Critical Theory for intercultural encounters. For instance, Farzin Vahdat argues that paramount in Habermas's work has been the attempt to synthesize universality with the modern development of subjectivity. Vahdat then applies Habermas's notion of a "mediating subjectivity" to analyze, respectively, the thought of Jamal al-din al-Afghani, Syed Qutb, one of the leading ideologues of Islamist movements, and Ayatollah Khomeini, Murtada Mutahhari and Ali Shariati, the three leading figures in the Iranian Revolution.

Another study that extends the insights of Critical Theory to a study of Islamic political thought, and the one that I wish to focus on, is Euben's (1999) dialogical analysis of Islamic fundamentalism. Euben is convinced that Habermas's Critical Theory completes the task of hermeneutic dialogue by incorporating the necessary space for distanciation and critique. Euben (1999: 17), hence, takes as her point of departure a reading of Qutb and the broader fundamentalist movement in terms that Qutb and other fundamentalists would use to describe themselves: as an attempt to re-discover and re-interpret eternal and divine truths outside the purview of the rationalist-empiricist

epistemology of modernity and to apply them to the contemporary social and political world.[9]

Since Euben follows Habermas more closely than she follows Gadamer, she returns to a familiar critique of Qutb's fundamentalist project for its attempt to universalize its own truths and for its failure to incorporate a conception of democratic freedoms.

At this point, I think, Euben's argument falters epistemologically and reveals the inability of Euben and, by implication, Critical Theory to remain committed to a dialogical framework. Having critiqued Qutb's thought from within, as it were, Euben suddenly steps outside of the dialogical frame and launches a full-blown critique on Qutb's failure to incorporate democratic freedoms.

Even though I agree with the substance of her point, I disagree with the epistemological path that she follows to get there because, as Ricoeur (1981 [1973]: 88) points out, Critical Theory is not the completion of the hermeneutic enterprise; instead, it is parallel or complementary to hermeneutic dialogue. Interpretation and explanation may not be antinomies, but the return to foundations, which is the focus of hermeneutics, begins at the opposite end of the field from the search for distanciation and critique. Ricoeur (1981 [1973]: 88) is not convinced that critique has a strong role in the hermeneutic tradition. Although the desire for critique is constantly indicated in hermeneutics, it is constantly aborted, because the main focus is to return to foundations. According to Ricoeur, hermeneutic experience discourages recognition of a critical instance, because it attempts to refute the "alienating distanciation" of the Other. Ricoeur also points out that, despite Critical Theory's claims to universality and to a meta-hermeneutic position, even the critique of ideology operates from *within* a tradition, the tradition of critique, which is different from the Romantic tradition at the heart of Gadamer's work. Moreover, despite its secular outlook, the critique of ideology is itself rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition of liberating acts such as the Exodus and the Resurrection (Ricoeur 1981 [1973]: 99).

Hermeneutic dialogue and Critical Theory do not share the same goals and Euben's desire to bring them into the same fold amounts to an unwarranted syncretism. Hence, Euben's double desire to convey the Other's self-understanding and to maintain space for distanciation and critique *in the mode of the critique of ideology* is contradictory. Unlike the Enlightenment conception of objectivity as a point outside of any tradition, Euben aspires to a new conception of impartiality that both seeks understanding of the Other and admits to being situated in

a particular post-foundationalist tradition. The problem is that, given Euben's scepticism of all universalizing truths and of all foundational traditions, she minimizes the modern, rationalist, social-scientific discourse that underlies Habermas's project and its embeddedness within the tradition of the critique of ideology. Habermas, after all, is still fully committed to the universalist, rational discourse of the "unfinished project of modernity." Despite her desire first to understand Islamic fundamentalism on its own terms and second to distance herself enough to critique it from a post-foundationalist point of view, she returns to the path of a foundationalist rationalist critique of ideology, which she initially argued was unable to adequately understand Islamic fundamentalism.

In developing her critique of Islamic fundamentalism, Euben would have done better to follow Susan Hekman (1986) who accepts Gadamer's view that the Enlightenment tradition of critique must be abandoned and then attempts to formulate a new, post-foundationalist conception of critique. Hekman provides no easy formulations for a new post-foundationalist critique, but at least she remains consistent in her attempt to take account of the Self's belongingness within a tradition and also eschew claims to "pure" and "objective" knowledge.

The vexatious problem—how to formulate a new conception of critique without relying on any foundation—that Euben and Hekman confront, respectively, is altogether avoided within Gadamerian hermeneutic dialogue, which already has the possibility of developing a different kind of critique. In essence, one need not go down the post-foundationalist path to develop a new conception of critique.

For instance, in his support of a hermeneutic conception of the human sciences, Taylor (1985 [1981]) argues that social scientists seek to explain behavior, and the agents whose behavior they are trying to explain already use (proto-) theory to define themselves. In other words, social researchers must not simply set aside an agent's self-definitions and self-interpretations, but must incorporate them into their explanations. In so doing, dialogical understanding leads not only to grasping the Other's self-understanding. Crucially, it also leads to *challenging* the Other's self-understanding, since "we make sense of the other if we grasp *both* how they see things *and* what is wrong, lacunary, contradictory in this" (C. Taylor 1985 [1971]: 118). Furthermore, in challenging the Other's language of self-understanding, one ends up challenging one's own language of understanding, as well. Indeed, there are times when one cannot properly question the Other without questioning the Self. In other words,

dialogical understanding already incorporates the ability to challenge the Other, without resorting to a critique of ideology.

At the time that Taylor first made this argument he was repudiating the dominance of positivism and naturalism in the human sciences. In our present context, it is necessary to extrapolate this argument and to apply it to the dominance of various models of poststructuralist theorizing.

Deconstruction

In its own way, deconstruction attends to the dual tasks of dialogue and critique by "measuring silences" (Spivak 1988: 284–86), that is, by attending to what a tradition refuses to say or cannot say. But if the effect of the interpretive and critical tasks is to destabilize a tradition, deconstruction claims to form it anew by adding a third category to each binary of thought (Borradori 2003). As an interpretive technique, deconstruction seeks to disassemble the Western philosophical tradition by revealing the ways in which it is based on an implicit hierarchical ordering of dichotomous categories (Borradori 2003: 138), one half of which is always suppressed, marginalized, omitted, or otherwise absent. By inverting the hierarchical ordering, deconstruction demonstrates that the original hierarchical structuring was not natural, not intrinsic to the dichotomous categories per se, but constructed for specific purposes. Deconstruction then introduces a third category to the dichotomy in an attempt to altogether destruct the Western philosophical tradition, in order finally to transform it anew from the rubble of its deconstruction. Hence, from the point of view of deconstruction, genuinely creative and productive understanding can only take place after each central category in any binary, logocentric tradition is deconstructed to reveal the meanings that it conceals or represses.

In this respect, deconstruction can be regarded as pointing to the limit of dialogue, because it posits that one achieves more creative and productive understanding by decoding the Other's un-said and unthought. Thus, deconstruction alerts us to the importance of "measuring silences" (Spivak 1988: 284), which Gadamer also recognizes but never fully appreciates.

Derrida (1976 [1967]) has been careful to limit the deconstructive critique to the Western philosophical tradition, although he (2001; see also Borradori 2003: 137–70) does refer to the Abrahamic roots of

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, thus implicating the Muslim philosophical tradition, as well. His followers have not always been so reticent. Perhaps the most celebrated application of deconstruction to Islamic thought has been in the work of Mohammed Arkoun, the Algerian-born Professor Emeritus of the History of Islamic Thought at the Sorbonne. Arkoun is somewhat ambiguous about Derrida's influence on himself. For instance, he writes:

> Derrida was aiming to introduce new cognitive strategies in the interpretation of the long philosophical tradition of thought in the ontological framework of classical metaphysics which has influenced theological thinking in the three "revealed" religions. As usual, not one historian of Islamic philosophy and theology paid any attention to the ensuing debate, which, while far-reaching, was limited to the linear history of Western thought from classical Greece to the present day, bypassing the Middle Ages [going] from Plato and Aristotle to Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza. It is true that the concept of deconstruction as Derrida used it, raised objections and rejection even among Western historians of philosophy. At the present stage of the history of Islamic thought, I do not need to enter into a theoretical debate about the philosophical legitimacy and the methodological relevance of deconstructivism and logocentrism. I do not support any specific position, but I think that it is important to show that the impact of logocentrism on Islamic thought is as strong, although less durable, as it was on European medieval thought. (2002: 31–2)

Over the course of a long career, Arkoun has claimed for himself a position on the margins of both the Islamic and Western scholarly traditions. This, too, in the name of dialogue, for it is from the margins of both traditions that Arkoun hopes to make Islam intelligible to the West and the West intelligible to the Muslim world. More generally, Arkoun's goal is to delineate a framework in which to question religious reason from the point of view of the rationality of the human sciences, and to question the rationality of the human sciences from the point of view of religious reason.

Arkoun (1993: 10–11) clearly spells out how the cognitive transformations of modernity have precipitated an epistemic and epistemological rupture with pre-modern thought, such that the discourse of religion, which is metaphorical and symbolic, is not translatable into modern scientific language, which claims to express things as they are without the least metaphorical opening (Arkoun et al. 1982: 23). Not only Islam but every pre-modern intellectual tradition must grapple with the

consequences of the rupture initiated by the cognitive transformations of modernity. According to Arkoun (1993: 10–11), Protestantism and Catholicism have already grappled with these consequences, but the world of Islam has still to do so.

According to Arkoun, to make Islam and the West intelligible to each other, to question religious reason via the rationality of the human sciences and vice versa, cannot be accomplished using inherited, conventional categories, which would be embedded in either one framework or the other. In keeping with deconstruction, Arkoun puts forth a third form of reason, which he refers to as emergent or interrogative reason, which would be capable of critiquing modern reason (i.e., in its positivist, techno-scientific, and procedural forms) and traditional religious reason. More recently, Arkoun (2002: 27–28) argues that alternatives such as Habermas's procedural reason and even postmodern thought, with its destabilizing and decentering effects, are unable to go beyond the inherited dichotomies of religious theological reason, and Enlightened scientific reason. Arkoun dismisses the liberatory potential of Habermas's ideal speech situation, because he argues that Habermas's procedural reason is too limiting, adequate only to critique juridical discourse and unable to acknowledge the role of the geopolitical sphere (Arkoun et al. 1982: 23). I noted above Habermas's lack of engagement with the Third World. Arkoun, too, notes that even the critical, emancipatory aspects of procedural reason are limited to usage in the West and not applied to the Muslim world.

For Arkoun, a self-declared utopian, emergent reason needs to fully encompass the human condition by being able to take into account the paradigmatic forms of modern reason as well as to hear the silenced, heterodox voices of the vanquished (Arkoun 2002: 21). By adopting this emergent, interrogative reason, Arkoun insists on the negative voice in order to examine the unthinkable and the unthought, to explore the "cultural and sociological residues" (Arkoun1984b: 35) engendered by the triumph of arbitrary powers, to demonstrate how every culture tends to consolidate its proper closure.

Thus, on Arkoun's view, a new form of analysis is needed that would reveal the ideological bases of religious categories and renew emancipatory readings. According to Arkoun, what has prevented the exercise of emergent reason so far is not only the beliefs of the faithful, who refuse to question their inherited ideas, but also the refusal of philosophers and social scientists, who are still locked into Orientalist modes of viewing Islam and all phenomena related to it as

sui generis, to question the epistemological postures of the non-West as well as their own.[10]Arkoun thus subjects the categories of "God, the prophetic function, the revealed and revealing Word, the sacred, retribution, prayer, trust in God, etcetera" to a new analysis. For example, Arkoun denotes revelation as "Revelation/revelation" and the Quran is written as a "Book/book" to alert the reader to what Arkoun considers its ambiguous status and to every religious reading of the Quran as ideological (Arkoun, 2002: 136).[11]

Despite his posture as one who sits on the interstices of Islamic traditional thought and secular, cultural modernity, what I find lacking in Arkoun's oeuvre is a significant questioning of the human sciences. Aside from pointing out that the human sciences have sought to displace the sovereignty of theology with the sovereignty of scientific reason, his only other critique is the general poststructuralist argument that the human sciences draw upon philosophical anthropology (i.e., upon the speculations on the nature of man), which they then cover with a veil of pseudo-objective science. This leads me to wonder whether Arkoun's claim to be defending a pluralistic, open epistemology to challenge both religious and secular fundamentalisms is fully justifiable. Is it not the case that Arkoun's argument amounts to secular fundamentalism, that is, to a dogmatic and final assertion of a modern, secular perspective that compels Muslims to deprive the Quran of its ontological status as a sacred revelation in order to serve its liberatory potential in this world? If the effect of following Foucault is the dispersal of Islam, so, too, is it the effect of following Derrida (at least, before the latter's turn to religion). Despite his claim to be neutral between religious reason and modern reason, Arkoun admits that he sees more dangers in theological reason, because it can be aligned more easily with political and state interests to discipline, marginalize, and exclude Others. However, since Arkoun is familiar with Critical Theory, why does he minimize the dangers of instrumental rationality, of the dialectic of the Enlightenment, of the ways in which instrumental rationality has been just as easily appropriated and implicated by political and state interests in the subjugation, manipulation, torture, and even genocidal extermination of internal and external populations? (Indeed, many Muslim states seem to merge the worst of theological and modern rationality.)

Arkoun's emerging reason is, like Derrida's deconstruction, a false promise. It undercuts the foundation of a well-established tradition without exposing the human sciences to the same sharp-eyed critique. Arkoun's project cannot move beyond the articulation of a

framework, because he never gets to the third, creative, constructive maneuver, which is continuously deferred. Does the deconstructionist not bear some responsibility for taking us beyond the interrogative attitude toward a more constructive one at some point? Arkoun is not entirely unaware of this, since he avers that a new emergent reason takes on the intellectual responsibility to help the culturally displaced, the intellectually dislocated populations who are uprooted from their cultural codes, systems of belief and values, those who, not yet integrated into the structures of the West, are labeled "fundamentalists" by sociologists and other social scientists (Arkoun 2002: 28–29).

Deconstruction remains radically skeptical of any truth-claims and permanently defers engagement with the Other in favor of a monological deconstructive disclosure. Whereas hermeneutic dialogue is a primarily constructive endeavor, a *mutual* attempt at understanding in order to better relate to the Other, deconstruction is essentially an individuating and destructive enterprise. Deconstruction's compulsive effort to take apart both the Other's and the Self's foundations goes too far without putting anything in its place and implicitly gives rise to nihilism (Hekman 1986: 195). Having been shorn of (what deconstruction considers superficial) foundations, how are people and traditions supposed to relate to each other? Deconstruction's promise of providing a new mode of thinking and relating is a false and broken promise, because, rather than aiding in the work of interpretation and cross-cultural understanding, deconstruction rejects the classical meaning of interpretation: to be mutually indebted (Julia Kristeva as cited in Hekman 1986: 195).

How responsible is it, then, to deny the roots of these culturally displaced populations by deconstructing the central categories of their worldview without helping them to replace these categories with anything more substantial? Must not a genuine search for understanding concede the right of Muslims to begin and end in the religious point of view, that is, to read the Quran as a sacred revelation without stripping it of its sacred status and without reducing this to an ideological reading? Arkoun's self-declared utopian emancipatory desire to break through all ideational frontiers by revealing their human construction betrays his equally genuine desire for a neutral dialogue, because the liberatory ideal is itself part of the modern secular rupture. In contrast, classic Islamic thought (might one hazard to say all traditional religious thought?) maintains that it is not through exposing frontiers and demolishing them but by acknowledging and accepting those limits as the maximum and the minimum of a range of possibilities that

human beings may attain not emancipation but tranquility, serenity and eventually salvation.[12]

Foundationalism and Interreligious Dialogue

In most cases of interreligious dialogue, the search for interpretive understanding normally amounts to a rational encounter in the arena of doctrines and opinions, to the mutual explication and elaboration of religious doctrines and worldviews, although, less commonly, it may also be a sentimental encounter of sympathy and antipathy (Panikkar 1999 [1978]: xv).[13] But what makes interreligious dialogue most compelling for my purpose is that in establishing interreligious dialogue the possibility of distortions of power and purpose (J. V. Taylor 1980 [1977])—such as when dialogue becomes a subterfuge to convert through power rather than a means to negotiate consensus (Masud 2004)—is already recognized. The genuine ecumenical desire for understanding the Other is balanced by a suspicion that the Other may be harboring a missionary desire. (Of course, another hazard is that the ecumenical desire to understand the Other may lead to an unwarranted syncretism (Cox 1992), albeit the consequences of this are not as dramatic as the consequences of coerced conversion). What distinguishes the suspicion of political and economic interests and of religious conversion in interreligious dialogue from suspicion in the critique of ideology is that the former does not lapse into economic determinism nor raise the claim of false consciousness. Unlike classical Marxism, which requires class consciousness and the ensuing class struggle to see through mystifying economic interests; unlike Foucauldian discourse analysis, which requires a genealogist of power to reveal discursive struggles; and unlike Derridean deconstruction, which evidently requires special philosophical training to deconstruct the repressions of the un-thought of a tradition, even a lay participant of interreligious dialogue is almost intuitively aware of the pitfalls in interreligious dialogue. For instance, one Hindu participant in an interreligious dialogue writes:

> Do not think that I am against dialogue… On the contrary, I am fully convinced that dialogue is an essential part of human life, and therefore of religious life itself… Yet, to be frank with you, there is something which makes me uneasy in the way in which you Christians are now trying so eagerly to enter into official and formal dialogue with us. Have you already forgotten that what you call "interfaith dialogue" is

> quite a new feature in your understanding and practice of Christianity? Until a few years ago, and often still today, your relations with us were confined, either to merely the social plane, or to preaching in order to convert us to your *dharma*…The main obstacles to real dialogue are, on the one hand, a feeling of superiority and, on the other, the fear of losing one's identity. (cited in Samartha 1981: 162)

Truth-Claims and the Role of Silence

Is there a point at which every dialogue may fail? Both Gadamer and Habermas assume that dialogue has the potential to be unending. Whereas Gadamer assumes that dialogues never fail, because every break in dialogue is itself the promise of a resumption of a later dialogue, one of the fundamental presuppositions of Habermas's ideal speech situation is that, given a universalistic procedural ethics and an egalitarian distribution of dialogue-chances, there is no reason that dialogues should ever fail—in an ideal speech situation people will talk about their differences and keep on talking (Agger 1981: 15). However, what Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutics and a Critical Theory of dialogue fail to appreciate is that it is not enough to limit dialogical understanding either to finding consensus or to revealing power differentials. Rather, even with the willingness of interlocutors to keep on listening or even in the face of an ideal speech situation, at some point radical differences may be so evident that it is impossible to keep on talking, at least on certain issues.

Here, both deconstruction and interreligious dialogue alert us to the important role of silence, albeit with very different implications.[14] Where deconstruction regards its critical task as one of "measuring silences," that is, silence as suppression, from the point of view of interreligious dialogue silence is not an indication of the intentional suppression of thought but a recognition of incommensurable difference, a recognition of the failure of dialogue to go beyond "final vocabularies." The refusal of dialogue may result from what Cox (1992: 165–68) argues are the ultimate questions of life and death. That is to say, despite one's best efforts to understand the Other, one is confronted by different and often irreconcilable beliefs about salvation.[15] An unwarranted syncretism notwithstanding, an interreligious dialogue may fall short and reveal once more the chasm between the Self and the Other. To be truly genuine, dialogue should not only reveal consensus or power differentials, but dialogical understanding must also probe the "jealousies of each faith" (J. V. Taylor 1981

[1977]: 224), those irreducible points from which both the Self and the Other claim universality and finality.

In this respect, Gadamerian hermeneutics seems to significantly undervalue the differences between truth-claims that often lead to silence and the temporary closure of dialogue. Although Gadamer recognizes intermittent silences in any dialogue, for him silence is always intermittent and his emphasis is always on the resumption of dialogue. In this, I think Gadamer fails to appreciate the foundationalism of religious believers who cannot simply dismiss silence as a temporary rupture. Since hermeneutics itself began partly as heir to the tradition of Christian exegesis, perhaps it is well to return it to its foundations in religion for renewed insights on dialogical understanding, especially with respect to the truth-claims of believers who are committed to final vocabularies that cannot be compromised or fused with Others' horizons.

Silence points to illegitimate dialogues and to the recognition of power differentials. But temporary silence also points to final vocabularies and to a mutual recognition of some fundamental differences. Although we may hope for sustained dialogue, there comes a point at which we may be confronted by a *permanent silence on certain issues* as a legitimate option. I do not intend to minimize the fear that violence may be a short step from silence. But dialogue is not in itself a guarantee of nonviolence. Let us not forget that violence may also occur while one engages in a duplicitous, disingenuous dialogue, and this indeed is the cardinal sin of Orientalism: its (lopsided) engagement with the Islamic Other aided and abetted colonial violence.

II

Muslim Debates on Social Knowledge

2

Muslim Reconstructions of Knowledge: The Cases of Nasr and al-Faruqi

The Context of Reconstruction

Throughout Muslim history, there have been important debates between theologians, philosophers, and mystics over what constitutes religious as opposed to more profane forms of knowledge. As I discuss in the next chapter, like many classical scholars, Ibn Khaldun devotes a lengthy section of his *Muqaddimah* to a discussion of the classification of knowledge. This, and his concern about the placement of his new discipline within such a classification, attests to the long-standing tradition in Muslim scholarly circles of debate over the very nature of knowledge itself.

In this chapter, I turn my attention to a contemporary form of these long-standing Muslim debates about knowledge and our understanding of the world. The particular expression of this debate that I will examine is popularly, though incorrectly, known as the Islamization of Knowledge. This expression of the debate on the reconstruction of knowledge began to coalesce in the 1970s, though its lineage can be traced back to the early 1920s.

Muhammad Iqbal's (1934) *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* was clearly a harbinger of this debate, and other early systematic attempts at the reconstruction of modern knowledge occurred in the 1930s and 1940s when Khurshid Ahmad, a follower of the neo-revivalist Abul Ala Mawdudi, began to discuss Islamic economics as an alternative system to capitalism and socialism. Seyyed Hossein Nasr's work on Islam and the philosophy of science, which he undertook as a doctoral student in the 1950s, was published in

1964. The specific notion of "Islamization" began with Syed Naquib al-Attas's (1969) *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago*. In 1977, the First International Conference on Muslim Education was held in Makkah. It addressed the need to integrate knowledge into an Islamic perspective. The conference further spurred on Nasr's call for the development of Islamic Science; it would also be crucial in giving rise to Ismail al-Faruqi's Islamization of Knowledge project. In the same year, al-Faruqi discussed his ideas at a conference in Switzerland, though his project would not be inaugurated formally until 1982 in Pakistan. In fact, al-Faruqi's Islamization of Knowledge project combined the earlier work on economics, which had not lived up to its initial promise, with a newer, more general focus on Islamizing the social sciences and humanities. Unfortunately, the title of al-Faruqi's specific project has been conflated with the larger debate on the reconstruction of knowledge, thereby erasing important differences between the various positions.[1] In a subsequent work entitled *Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future,* Syed Naquib al-Attas (1985) argued that secularization of knowledge is the greatest threat to Muslims. More recently, the work of the *Ijmali* group of thinkers has critiqued the Islamization of Knowledge project for its narrow approach to the Islamization of existing social science disciplines, arguing instead that disciplines develop, evolve, and have meaning only within a particular worldview; hence, there is the need to develop new disciplines centered on civilizational analysis.

Nasr's attempt to formulate an Islamic Science, al-Faruqi's attempt to "Islamize" the humanities and social sciences and the *Ijmali* critique of al-Faruqi's project have emerged as the most well-known projects in the reconstruction of knowledge debate. Yet Nasr's and al-Faruqi's projects differ considerably from one another, not only in their appraisal of modernity as an intellectual and affective orientation to the world but also on the role of rationality versus intuition in reconstructing knowledge from within an Islamic worldview. These differences arise partly because Nasr and al-Faruqi represent some of the different tendencies and tensions within a new Muslim critical intellectual current. Notwithstanding these important differences, which are discussed below, the literature on the reconstruction of knowledge responds to the increasing awareness of modernity as a worldview, a worldview that marginalizes religiously inspired ones by depriving knowledge of its teleological and sacred qualities. Together, these projects confront the secular presumption that

the tension between science and religion, knowledge and faith, is universal.

In referring to the cognitive transformations of modernity, I am not suggesting that the literature on reconstruction is a free-floating discourse unaffected by the context of imperialism. Nor do I accept the epiphenomenal status that is often ascribed to it by its critics. Indeed, although the literature as a whole and the differing positions of the protagonists cannot be properly understood without setting it into its historical context, as I do below, neither can it be reduced solely to the postcolonial moment.

Over the past decade, social theorists (Turner 2003, 1986, 1985; Stauth 2002; Pieterse 1996; Tibi 1995) have indeed turned their attention to the debate on reconstruction, but they have too easily dismissed it as merely ideological (Pieterse being the exception here). I return to, and partly review, the debate on reconstruction not only to provide a more sustained engagement with it but also, and much more importantly, to indicate how this debate enters into a dialogue with Western social theory. I argue that, in adopting too narrow a perspective, proponents and critics alike have failed to perceive the most fruitful aspect of the debate on reconstruction: the debate articulates social-theoretical critiques from Muslim perspectives of the cognitive transformations of modernity, critiques that, in attempting to re-enchant modernity, are implicitly carrying on a dialogue with Western social theory.

Postcolonialism and the New Muslim Intellectuals

Notwithstanding his anti-imperialist views, Iqbal's (1934) *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* which is concerned primarily with demonstrating the compatibility of Islamic conceptions of God, time, space, and the nature of Man with modern Western conceptions, particularly in the work of Hegel, Fichte, Bergson, and Nietzsche (Esposito 1999: 57), stands out as an early significant effort at a sustained elaboration and synthesis of Western intellectual modernity.

In contrast to al-Afghani and Iqbal, other reformers, such as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), largely accepted the reality of European political rule and focused instead on transforming Muslim educational institutions, based on European models. Khan, for example, founded a translation society in 1864 for the introduction of

modern Western texts to India and in 1874 established the Anglo-Muhammadan Oriental College at Aligarh (Esposito 1999: 38).

The self-evident material progress of the Europeans, combined with the recognition for reform and development in Muslim societies, increasingly made their isolationist positions untenable. Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), who had received a traditional religious education in Egypt but was greatly transformed by his contact with al-Afghani in Paris, appeared to recognize this. After the British allowed Abduh to return to Egypt from his exile in Paris, he became the Imam of al-Azhar University and *mufti* of Egypt. He subsequently used his positions to reform Egyptian law, especially with regard to the status of women, and the curriculum of al-Azhar (Esposito 1999: 24; Esposito and Voll 2001: 60). Thus, Abduh is an anomalous figure because, on the one hand, he was part of the established structure of the *ulama* and, on the other hand, he came to be recognized as the "father of Islamic modernism" by supporters and critics alike (Esposito 1999: 59). It is ironic, too, that despite being exiled by the British, Abduh, like Khan, largely sought to introduce internal educational reform within the constraints of colonial rule.

Much has been written about the early reformers and their liberal and modernist re-interpretations of Islam (Arkoun 2002; Kurzman 2002, 1998; Abed al-Jabri 1995 [1994]; Binder 1988). Yet it is not clear whether they recognized that modernization, based on the gross exploitation of natural resources for material progress, reflects a mechanized view of nature. Did their unqualified admiration of modern rationality and science, combined with the preoccupation of economic and political domination, blind them to the value transfers inherent in science and technology? Or did they recognize and accept such value transfers as necessary to the development of Muslim society? In effect, were their re-interpretations ultimately naïve, or were they all too aware of the implications of their syntheses? Indeed, their overwhelming desire for a synthesis of modernity and Islam seems to have overlooked the *ulama*'s criticisms of the modern condition, as well as the internal critique of modernity that had already emerged in the work of Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, for instance.

The grip of European economic and political domination in the early twentieth century appeared to weaken between the two World Wars and eventually gave way to the autocratic rule of nationalist secular elites. Yet, the rise of the indigenous secular elites, of the sort referred to by Macaulay, was itself proof of the increasing cultural penetration of Muslim societies. The nascent critical Muslim intellectual

current that had sought to replicate European institutions and had provided religious rationales for the adoption of political and intellectual modernity now began to distinguish the need for modernization from the crisis of Westernization. By the mid-decades of the twentieth century, neo-revivalists, such as Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903–1979), Hassan al-Banna (1906–1949) and Syed Qutb (1906–1966), eschewed the reformers' attempts to synthesize European emphases on rationality, science, and material development with an Islamic ethos. In so doing, Mawdudi, al-Banna, and Qutb were, in fact, drawing upon the eighteenth-century revivalist tendency as epitomized by Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (d. 1792), who blamed cultural accretions for the weaknesses in Muslim society. For instance, al-Banna and Qutb, in particular, viewed Abduh's rational justifications of Islam as encouraging unbelief. Despite their criticisms of the reformers' attempts at synthesis, the neo-revivalists shared their emphasis on reforming education and agreed with the early reformers' criticisms of the conservatism of the *ulama*. They shared, too, the view that, instead of relying exclusively on the classical legacy of the traditional schools of law and scholarship, an unmediated return to the sources of Islam alone would provide the renewal of Muslim society. Rather than simply accommodating or assimilating to modernization, these neo-revivalists argued that liberalism and socialism represented secular and materialistic values, which threatened the cultural identity of Muslims. For the neo-revivalists, the best option was to return to an unmediated Islam, since it already contained within it the best elements of modern ideologies: the consensual nature of liberal democracy, the egalitarianism and social justice of socialism and communism, and the discipline of fascism (e.g., Qutb 1970 [1953]). What Islam needed was not reform, for it was already perfect; what it needed were adherents who could apply its essential principles in light of changed social conditions, conditions which they thought the *ulama* failed to address. For instance, Mawdudi argued that an Islamic State is an ideological state best described as a "theo-democracy," that is, a polity based on the Quranic concept of *shura* [consensus], under the will and sovereignty of God, rather than under the general will or popular sovereignty (Mawdudi 1990 [1940]).

Although it is easy to dismiss al-Banna, Qutb, and Mawdudi as ideologues and "pamphleteers" (Abou el Fadl 2001b: 156), it is worth noting that they sensed some of the implications of the cognitive transformations underlying modernity. Even if we reject Mawdudi's superficial argument that the liberal notion of popular sovereignty

supersedes the sovereignty of God (Donohue and Esposito 1982: 252–60), we must acknowledge the increasing exclusion of the Divine in the political and moral realms. Similarly, is there more than an ounce of truth in Qutb's denunciation of modernity as an Age of *Jahilliya*, an Age of Ignorance, because of modernity's reliance upon a strictly rationalist-empiricist epistemology that repudiates the authority of metaphysical truths (Euben 1997: 434–45)? On Qutb's view, an epistemology that willfully rejects God's authority and revealed Truth renders life meaningless, because questions such as, "Why are we born?" "How should we live?" and "Why do we die?" lie outside the domain of rationally-empirically verifiable truth. Hence, at the heart of their politics, and of revolutionaries such as Ayatollah Khomeini, is the kernel of a philosophical critique of modernity (Euben 1999, 1997; Sayyid 1997), albeit their philosophical critiques are inchoate and are overwhelmed by the political projects. It is unfortunate that much of the academic literature (Euben's account being exceptional) on "Islamic fundamentalism" has, like the journalistic accounts that we often dismiss, failed to reach beyond the rhetoric of these ideologues. Even if Mawdudi's and Qutb's ideological rejections of modernity offered little in the way of systematic reconstruction, they were crucial in giving voice to the alienation experienced under increasing cultural penetration.

Projects of Reconstruction

The failure of postcolonial Muslim societies to actualize the fruits promised by modernization and development schemes, while exposing them to the values inherent in such programs, further highlights the entrenchment of Western economic control and cultural penetration. It is in this broad socio-historical context that the debate on the reconstruction of knowledge currently plays out. For intellectuals such as Nasr and al-Faruqi the malaise that pervades Muslim societies can only be fully addressed once modernity is apprehended as a *Weltanschauung*, which encompasses economic and colonial dominance, political ideals, and development schemes. For this generation of critical Muslim intellectuals, the challenge for Muslims is nothing less than the reconstruction of knowledge that continues to be transferred to Muslim societies, underpinning Western dominance and threatening the vitality of Muslim societies. For these thinkers, engaging with modernity as a worldview means that its challenges

are more than just economic and political at the macro level and more than just issues of social and personal identity at the micro level. It means recognizing the intellectual and affective orientation to the world wrought by modernity, an orientation that creates tensions for a religiously inspired cosmology. In the following section, I examine Nasr's attempt to formulate an Islamic Science and al-Faruqi's attempt to "Islamize" the humanities and social sciences, because these have emerged as two of the most prominent projects in the debate and because their respective positions exemplify the tensions in differing Muslim responses to modernity.

At once critical of the Western drift of postcolonial secular elites and also of the rigid formalism of the *ulama*, the precarious in-between positions of Nasr and al-Faruqi have meant that they, like many other such Muslim intellectuals, ironically address the problems of Muslim societies from within the bosom of the West, where they have had to seek refuge. But living in the bosom of the West and working in university settings has exposed them to the internal dialogue and critique already taking place within the heart of modernity. Hence, in reviewing their projects, I also attempt to indicate the ways in which an implicit dialogue with Western social theory is already taking place.

Nasr's Re-enchantment

Nasr, one of the foremost commentators on Islam and modernity, has formal training in geology, geophysics, and the philosophy of science that complements his knowledge of the traditional Islamic legacy of theology, science, Sufism, and speculative philosophy.[2] Nasr has written voluminously, across disciplinary boundaries, and among his most cited books are *Religion and the Order of Nature* (1996); *Knowledge and the Sacred* (1989); *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (1975); and *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (1993a [1964]). A formidable grasp of both modern scientific principles and traditional Islamic cosmology allows Nasr to stake out a very distinctive path in his defense of the traditional Islamic legacy against the onslaught of modernity. A pioneer in the Islamic critique of scientism, Nasr was also one of the first thinkers to recognize the threat to the environment arising out of the modern worldview. By drawing upon the internal Western critique in the philosophy and history of science, and connecting it to the Islamic criticism of materialism and secularism, Nasr emerges as a radical critic of modernity.

The Traditionalist School

Nasr is the leading proponent of the Traditionalist School,[3] a religious rendition of the *philosophia perennis* movement, which posits that a perennial philosophy has been manifest throughout all the philosophical investigations of humankind. The Traditionalist School posits that a perennial Wisdom, or *Sophia perennis*, has been manifest in each of the World Religions, in accordance with historical circumstances, personality types, and individual needs in order to fulfill the primordial human need to connect with the Sacred. For the Traditionalist School, tradition thus refers not to the continuity of a certain practice but to a cosmology that puts the Divine or the Sacred at its center. It refers particularly to the transmission of sapiential knowledge found in the spiritual, esoteric, or Gnostic traditions in each of the World Religions, a knowledge that recognizes the sacred and divine origin of the cosmos (Nasr 2001c: 270). Contrary to denying the validity of the *Sophia perennis,* the particularity of each religion, in fact, makes possible the attachment of the relative to the Absolute, of humanity to God, in different times and different societies, for underlying the particularity of each World Religion is the transcendent unity of religion. According to Nasr (1989; see also Wolf-Gazo 2001: 279), premodern civilizations were so immersed in cosmological, theocentric worldviews that encompassed wholeness, unity, and the sacredness of life that it would have been impossible to conceive of a totally profane or de-traditionalized world as in modernity, which severs the link between the Divine and humanity.

Critique of the Early-Reformist Response

Nasr is a traditionalist *par excellence,* and his implacable traditionalism puts him at odds with the early reformers. According to Nasr, in their denial of the relevance of Sufism, classical Islamic philosophy and traditional Islamic sciences—such as astronomy, physics, medicine, alchemy, geometry—and in their attempt to demonstrate Islam's putative compatibility with various Western intellectual trends, the early reformers reveal their deep-seated inferiority complex. For Nasr, their attempts at synthesis and compatibility either graft traditional concepts upon modern ones, neglecting the perennial truths of Islam, or they reduce Islam to a modifying adjective for the most incommensurable of systems. Nasr directs harsh criticism at Iqbal for attempting to synthesize the Islamic concept of *al-insan al-kamil,* the Perfect Man, with the Nietzschean concept

of the *Überman*, concepts that, for Nasr, are at antipodes, one from the other (Nasr 1975: 139). Similarly, he criticizes the early reformers for attempting to trace the lineage of modern science through the Scientific Revolution and the Renaissance back to Islam's Golden Age. Nasr concurs that classical Islamic culture and science did play a role in the rise of the Renaissance. However, he argues that these Islamic elements were utilized in the Renaissance after they had been divorced from their Islamic character and torn from the order in which they attained full meaning and significance (Nasr 1975: 148). Most of all, though, Nasr is critical of the early reformers for evading the challenge posed by scientism, that is, by the extension of modern scientific reasoning beyond its legitimate boundaries, exemplified most notably by evolutionary theory. According to Nasr, Darwin's biological theory of evolution remains a hypothesis, having never been proven across species, yet it is accepted as scientific fact by scientists and lay people alike. Evolutionary theory is then translated from a hypothesis about biology into a social Darwinism, as though the original hypothesis were already scientific fact. In other words, scientism extends into the social realm the claims of science beyond the legitimate limits of science itself. For example, according to Nasr, social Darwinism suggests that Man can become perfect by processes of natural social evolution alone, thereby enabling the forgetfulness of God. Nasr acknowledges that there exist within modernity sacralizing, reactionary counter-currents such as Romanticism, but he argues that, although salutary, they lack the discipline and sapiential knowledge of traditional World Religions. Hence, such counter-currents remain minor, unable to overcome the culmination of a number of different reductionistic currents that comprise modernity: the humanism and anthropomorphism of the Renaissance, the rationalism and mechanism of the Scientific Revolution, the secularization inaugurated by the Reformation, and the evolutionism of Darwinian biology that is extrapolated into a developmental theory of History and of Man.

In Nasr's view, rather than deploying traditional concepts against evolutionism, the early reformers appropriate it as though there were no conflict with the Islamic worldview. Again Nasr criticizes Iqbal, whom he views as an exemplar of the early reformers, for falling prey to conceptions of linear progress and history and for failing to develop traditional Islamic conceptions of Man and Time. In their haste to appropriate Western intellectual fashions, the early reformers neglect Islamic metaphysics about eschatological events and the end

of time and ignore all the *ahadith* (pl. of *hadith*) that contradict such fashions. Nasr (1975: 139) writes:

> Just the one *hadith* of the Prophet that asserts that the best generation of Muslims is those who are his contemporaries, then the generation after, then the following generation until the end of time, is sufficient to nullify, from the Islamic point of view, the idea of linear evolution and progress in history.

Critique of Modern Science

For Nasr, and indeed all the proponents of the Traditionalist School, modernity is an anomaly in the history of the world, a renewed *jahilliya*, an Age of Ignorance, because it is only in the modern *Weltanschauung* that forgetfulness becomes dominant, even though forgetfulness of the Sacred has always been an element in human history. Without an overarching religious framework, humanity severs the link with Divinity as never before and forgets the divine origins of both outer and human nature. Nasr's project reminds us of the symbolic element of reality that has been lost under the literalist reign of modern science and, in keeping with Sufism's emphasis on the veil of perception, Nasr (1975: 6) argues that modernity's knowledge of Self and the natural world remains superficial, an externalized image away from the cosmic center because "[t]he classical error of modern civilization [is] to mistake the quantitative accumulation of information for qualitative penetration into the inner meaning of things." The modern sciences destroy the sacred and metaphysical foundations of knowledge, because they are the most anthropocentric form of knowledge possible, making human reason and empirical data the sole criteria for the validity of all knowledge (Nasr 1975: 14, fn. 1). The natural and social sciences exclude all other possibilities of knowing, because they deny the existence of different orders of reality. They deny the epistemological premise that the reality of the world is more than it appears to us.

Sacred Science and Re-enchantment

In contrast to these modern sciences, Nasr turns to the sapiential tradition within the World Religions for a holistic treatment of the hierarchy of knowledge that corresponds to different orders of reality. Whereas the natural and social sciences limit valid knowledge to a rationalist understanding of the phenomenal world, which gives rise

to an analytical and fragmentary conception of the world, a holistic conception of knowledge turns to the Intellect and Reason, that is, to both intuition and rationality.[4] However, ultimately it is the intellective or intuitive understanding of higher levels of reality that is synthetic and interpretive and potentially allows Man to know God.[5]

More specifically, according to Nasr, the process of the reconstruction of knowledge must begin with the realization by Muslims that they cannot merely absorb modern scientific knowledge into an Islamic worldview, as if it were the *ilm,* the knowledge that the Quran repeatedly exhorts believers to seek. Muslims must distinguish science from scientism so as to recognize the limit of science in order to develop an intellectual and ethico-social critique of modern science (Nasr 2001a: 306, also 1975: 139). Nasr repeatedly points out that the knowledge to which the Quran refers is set within a sacred framework, just as all the traditional Islamic sciences were bound by a metaphysical framework of the harmony and total order of the universe (Nasr 1975). The reconstruction of knowledge must therefore take place both in terms of a true metaphysics of the nature of God and in terms of a science of the manifested cosmic order, which exists as a sign and symbol of higher reality (Nasr 2001b: 463–64). He argues:

> Were a true metaphysics, a *scientia sacra*, to become once again a living reality in the West, knowledge gained of man [and nature] through scientific research could be integrated into a pattern which would also embrace other forms of knowledge ranging from the purely metaphysical to those derived from traditional schools of psychology and cosmology. *But in the field of the sciences of man*, as in that of the sciences of nature, the great impediment is precisely the monolithic and monopolistic character which modern Western science has displayed since the seventeenth century. (Nasr 1975: 11, emphasis added)

The process of reconstruction requires, therefore, the restitution of the place of the Intellect over and above the place of Reason, so that humanity may once again rejoin the link with God, the relative with the Absolute. Since the Intellect is able to know the Absolute, it must form the premise for a reconstructed paradigm of knowledge (Nasr 2001a: 311).

With the recognition of the anthropocentric nature of modern knowledge, the reconstruction of knowledge must re-turn to the concept of *tawhid* to reveal the underlying "unity and interrelatedness of all that exists" (cited in Kalin 2001: 451). *Tawhid,* in the first instance

a theological notion referring to the strict unity and oneness of God, is here elaborated into a comprehensive metaphysical perspective of the unity of all phenomena. So, while it may be tempting to view the emphasis on *tawhid as* a nostalgic return to the undifferentiated unity of pre-modern times, Nasr's conception of re-turning to *tawhid* is one of rediscovering the primordial bond between God and humanity that has been severed (Wolf-Gazo 2001). The reconstruction of knowledge within the framework of *tawhid* amounts, therefore, to a re-enchantment of the world, a re-sacralization, a reversal of the process of rationalization, the *Entzauberungprozess*: "Certainly my goal is to move in the opposite direction than what Max Weber called the *Entzauberungprozess*" (Nasr 2001a: 305). Although Nasr does not point out specifics in the process of re-enchantment, the revival of Tradition plays a central role in it, because for him a de-traditionalized world cannot manifest the sacred (Wolf-Gazo 2001: 279), nor is there any possibility that modern science, or the modern world more generally, could overcome its own shortcomings (Nasr 2001c: 274). It is only a sacred science that can check scientism, which otherwise will "not cease to grow in strength by the day, while the applications of science in the form of technology protrude to an ever greater degree into the last bastion of 'sacredness' in the West, which is the human person, at the same time also accelerating the destruction of the globe ecologically" (Nasr 2001c: 275).

Nasr and Weber appear to be arguing from opposite points of view on the *Entzauberungprozess*, and yet in one sense Nasr's view converges with Weber's: both are commenting on the *uniqueness* of modernity. While Weber argues that the process of disenchantment reaches its peak in the modern Occident, he does not go so far as to assert that this ultimately extinguishes all the possibilities for transcendental reasoning. As I discuss in Chapter 5, Weber (1946c [1919]: 155) leaves open the possibility of an "intellectual sacrifice" for those who cannot face the fate of the times and wish to recapture some sort of transcendence; in contrast, for those who are stoic and rational enough, Weber's appraisal of modernity remains ambivalent and pessimistic. Weber's pessimism about the profanation and rationalization of the world offsets his view of Western exceptionalism and the universality of Western culture, and he emerges as resigned to world-historical development, a fatalistic critic of modernity. From Nasr's point of view, the particular conglomeration of currents that has brought about the uniqueness of modernity also renders it an *anomaly* in the history of civilizations, for it is the only civilization

that denies cosmological origins. Modernity is both irredeemable and irremediable, since minor counter-reactions, such as Romanticism, are not sufficient to suture the breach left by modernity's rupture with Transcendence. But for Nasr, it is still not too late to abandon *in toto* the path that leads to the iron cage.

In disclosing Nasr's implicit dialogue with Weber, it remains to be noted that the dialogue is a delicate one, since, as Manzoor (2001: 13) argues, the terminology of disenchantment and re-enchantment connotes magical and animistic elements in an immanentist conception of the world that is incompatible with the Transcendent vision of Islam.[6] Manzoor does have a point, and yet the crux of Weber's argument about disenchantment is not made with respect to magic or animism but with respect to a monotheistic religion in the modern world, that is, to the loss of a personal God and the consequent loss of meaning. Moreover, Manzoor's objection seems to dismiss the fact that, notwithstanding the overriding emphasis in Islam on God's omnipotence and otherness, the Quran also describes God as near (2: 186, see also 27: 62) and closer to Man than his jugular vein (50:16, see also 56: 85), descriptions which suggest that, without subscribing to the strong immanentist proclivities of Sufism, in Islam there remains to some extent an unresolved tension between God's Transcendence and His Immanence.

For Nasr, Romanticism is a salutary, though unsuccessful, reaction to the strident rationalism of the Enlightenment and the mechanistic conceptions of the Scientific Revolution. For Nasr, universalism, or, more properly speaking, universal knowledge, is only possible after acknowledging the Divine Presence in the cosmos. Nasr's appeal to intuition as the basis of reconstructed knowledge derives from his view that intuitive, sapiential knowledge creates an intimate relationship between the knower, the act of knowing and that which is to be known (Nasr 1989). Nasr thus extends the notion of *tawhid* from its specific orthodox conception of the unity of God to the controversial Unity of Being. The notion of *tawhid* here impinges on both the ontological and epistemological levels, as it refutes the subject-object dichotomy that is at the heart of the post-Enlightenment mode of knowing. According to Nasr, rationality devoid of intuition, the subject separated from its object, leads us to become fixated on the particular, the relative, and the transient or on the Universal, the Absolute, and the Eternal, without ever being able to connect the two.

On Nasr's view, the process of reconstruction of knowledge has to question not only the ontological status of material reality but also

the epistemological status of the knowledge that seeks to explain that reality. Thus, Nasr's reconstruction delves deep into metaphysics as a necessary reversal of the process of rationalization in modernity.

Alarmingly, Nasr is aware that such a cognitive reversal also has social implications, but this does not trouble him. Indeed, his rejection of modernity is so strident that he is even unwilling to acknowledge the amelioration of social inequity made possible by modern institutions (Smith 2001), for he regards the good that derives from modernity as incidental and accidental, whereas the evil that it produces is a necessary consequence of its precepts. Implicitly, Nasr (1989: 102) concedes that this is an extreme view when he characterizes his own master René Guénon's criticisms of modernity as strident, or when shortly after 9/11 he commented that Islam is not against modernity per se but against a society of forgetfulness of God.[7] Despite this recent softening of his position, Nasr's view is that only an extreme reaction can counteract the "juggernaut of modernity" (Giddens 1990). Nasr's foundational reliance on hierarchy, while it makes possible a holistic approach to knowledge, surely goes too far when he defends all the social and political institutions of pre-modern societies that are rejected now in the modern emphasis on *egalité*.

Nasr is so critical of the modern belief in progress and evolutionary theory that he fails to notice that it was Herbert Spencer's (1971; 1961 [1881]) social evolutionism that influenced Darwin's biological theory, and not vice versa. This is an important correction, for we should not impute the denial of theism, which is inferred from Darwin's theory of evolution, to Spencer's social evolutionism. It is true that, in his critique of religion, Spencer (1961 [1881]: 26 and 271) does argue that a "theological bias" brings error into the estimates that men make of societies and institutions and that the "idea of a social science is entirely alien, and indeed repugnant" to those who see in every social phenomena the direct intervention of God. However, Spencer is here critiquing those who invoke God as though He were moved by the same motives as human beings, and who see God as a partisan of narrow sectarian, national, or other affiliations. Nasr would surely concur that it is one thing to note that nothing happens in contravention of God's Will but entirely another to think that God directly compels everything, which Spencer refutes. In his criticisms of scientism and evolutionary theory, had Nasr referenced Spencer's work, he would no doubt be greatly surprised at how much of a dialogue is possible, since Spencer is not Auguste Comte, and the former's social evolutionism is not like the Comtean stages of history, which relegate metaphysics and theology to

the dustbin of history. Like Nasr, Spencer (1961 [1881]: 25) is puzzled by those who hold a mechanistic conception of human will and the cosmos and who regard the Cause of the Universe as "more marvelous by comparing its operations to those of a skilled mechanic." Spencer actually comes very close to an Islamic view in regarding the Devil as an opponent of man and not of God, who would be obliged to overcome opposition by subtle devices. Nasr's point that social evolutionism leads to the forgetfulness of God because it suggests that perfection will accrue by evolution alone applies only to certain strong linear versions of evolutionary theory, such as Comte's, but not to Spencer's (1971: 207–15), which incorporates the "re-barbarization" and "retrogression" of civilizations, the degeneration of processes of social evolution. In sum, Nasr's critique of scientism and evolutionary theory overlooks the fact that Darwin, like Spencer, posits no inherent unilinear conception of progress.

Al-Faruqi's Islamization of Knowledge

In many ways, al-Faruqi[8] epitomizes the new current of intellectuals that seeks to bridge the bifurcated world of postcolonial secular elites and the traditional *ulama*. Al-Faruqi was born in Palestine in 1921 and became the governor of the province of Galilee at the age of 24. However, three years later, with the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, al-Faruqi became a refugee and eventually came to the United States to pursue academic training, completing a PhD in philosophy in 1952. He returned to the Middle East and studied at al-Azhar from 1954 to 1958, but finally settled in the United States in the late-1960s. Although his early work in the 1950s and 1960s concentrated on ethnic identity and Arab consciousness, in the late-1960s his focus shifted to Islam and Muslim identity.[9] In 1971, he helped found the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) and in his first presidential address articulated the need to "Islamize" modern knowledge. He also founded and was president of a small American Islamic College in Chicago. By 1981, al-Faruqi was instrumental in establishing the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), which publishes the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (*AJISS*), one of the main vehicles for the dissemination of the Islamization of Knowledge project. Al-Faruqi's "institutional activism" extended into the established structures of America when he founded programs in Islamic studies in the departments of religion at Syracuse University and Temple University in the mid- to late-1960s. Later, he

also established and chaired (1976–1982) the Islamic Studies Steering Committee of the American Academy of Religion. In fact, al-Faruqi has been so influential in terms of mobilizing awareness and support in academia for the study of Islam and Muslim communities in North America that Esposito and Voll (2001) have devoted a chapter to him in their volume on *Contemporary Makers of Islam (*see also Ghamari-Tabrizi 2004b).

Al-Faruqi's thought is marked by a series of shifts. For instance, his doctoral work on Arab identity was "deeply influenced by the phenomenology of Max Scheler, particularly the latter's notion of axiological intuitionism," which posits the *a priori* emotional intuition of value (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2004b: 67). Abdul Wahhab's revivalist desires clearly influenced al-Faruqi, who translated his writings on *tawhid* (al-Faruqi1992 [1982]: 20, fn. 8; see also Esposito and Voll 2001: 220, fn. 11) and also wrote a monograph, *al-Tawhid: Its Implications for Thought and Life* (1992), in which Abdul Wahhab's ideas figure prominently. Furthermore, al-Faruqi's thought also indicates the heavy influence of the early reformers' emphasis on the compatibility of rationality and Islam. Thus, al-Faruqi's synthesis positions him as a proponent for the development of social sciences that are rationally grounded but also framed by Islamic values. This synthesis is clearly evident in the co-edited volume *Social and Natural Science: the Islamic Perspective* (al-Faruqi and Nasseef 1981*)* and in a subsequent paper (al-Faruqi 1988) that lays out the problems and principles of the Islamization of Knowledge project.

Even though the Islamization of Knowledge project continued after his passing, al-Faruqi's general outline and his detailed workplan were seminal in defining the intellectual terrain of the project.[10] However, deprived of the zeal of al-Faruqi and, more importantly, unable to produce any remarkable breakthroughs, the project has become largely moribund in the last few years as fewer articles in *AJISS* deal specifically with it.[11]

The Malaise of the Ummah

For al-Faruqi (1988: 15, 18–35), the Muslim world is pervaded by a malaise that originates from the conglomeration of varied and opposing styles, both Islamic and Western, that renders the modern Muslim a barbarized self, estranged from his Islamic legacy and discontinuous with his past. In sum, "a cultural monstrosity." Al-Faruqi argues that in pre-modern Islamic history, under the influence

of Hellenic philosophy and Sufism, Islam witnessed a separation of *aql* from *wahy*, a bifurcation of reason from revelation, respectively, that was unknown in its very early formative history. This bifurcation led to the excessive reliance on intuition and esotericism and meant that the acceptance of revelation became "subjective, arbitrary, and whimsical." The revivalism and ethnocentrism of Abdul Wahhab's thought, along with the anti-mystical tendencies of many of the early reformers, lead al-Faruqi to blame the Muslims of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates for disengaging from the world and becoming influenced by Sufism's emphasis on gnosis, mystical experiences, intuition, and esoteric interpretations, which were brought into the Islamic fold by Hellenized Christian and Jewish converts. Al-Faruqi thus blames Sufism for transforming Islam's emphasis on social justice into a personal concern for self-purification and self-ennoblement, and for taking Islam away from its original emphasis on rationality into the domain of intuition, esotericism, and the irrational.

In terms of modern Western history, al-Faruqi (1988: 51–53) blames Romanticism for derailing the universalist vision of the Enlightenment by giving impetus to pre-existing European beliefs about the hierarchy of races. In effect, the Enlightenment's Universal Man and Universal Humanity turned out to refer only to Western man and Western humanity. Romanticism not only reconceived the Enlightenment's rational man to one informed principally by experience and intuition, hailing from a mythical land with deep roots in nationalistic sentiment, it also reconceived religion as ineffable experience rather than rational belief. Al-Faruqi writes:

> The Western social sciences: history, geography, economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology, were all developed under the impetus provided by Romanticism. All of them, each in its own way, are based upon the ethnocentric view that the nation, or ethnic entity in its well-defined geography and demography, but infinite and woozy history, is the ultimate unit of analysis and value. (1988: 52)

Modern Muslims are, thus, inheritors of a double bifurcation: of *aql* from *wahy*, reason from revelation, universalism from particularism, the one inherited from their own legacy and the other from the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment. The present generation of Muslim intellectuals lives these bifurcations—"the epitome of Muslim decline"—as a form of spiritual torture even more than the early reformers, because the present generation is fully trained in the

West yet maintains its deep connections to the Muslim milieu and legacy (al-Faruqi 1988: 16–24). In contrast, the early reformers, such as Syed Ahmad Khan, al-Afghani, and Abduh, who were not trained in the Western sciences, did not see the worldview underlying modern education, which they attempted to replicate in their societies. Nor did they perceive that the humanities and the social and natural sciences comprise an integral view of reality that is connected to the manifestation of Western power and productivity. Attempts at Westernization, which were essentially short cuts to close the gap between the West and the Muslim world, only undermined their own religion and culture, because they did not derive from the experiences of modernity in the Muslim world, which has neither outgrown Islam in the same way that Europe outgrew Christianity nor been able to accept the worldview of modernity completely (al-Faruqi 1988: 23–24). For al-Faruqi, although Reason's capacity for self-criticism offers fair degrees of protection, it needs to be guided by the first principles that derive from revelation. The development of secular educational institutions alongside unreformed traditional *madrasahs*[12] further bifurcates Reason from Revelation, modernity from tradition, and represents the main locus and core of the *ummah's* malaise. Al-Faruqi cites the example of al-Azhar, which houses a traditional religious education system that runs parallel to the modern education system, with no contact between the two.

Critique of Modern Knowledge

According to al-Faruqi (1988: 16), the need for the reconstruction of knowledge begins with the recognition that the Western social sciences and humanities are problematic for Muslims, because they represent an "alien vision," which is evident in the very ideas of reality, nature, man, and society. He (1981b: 11–17) identifies three main shortcomings of Western social sciences that necessitate an Islamic reconstruction: (1) Social scientific explanations remain incomplete, because they reduce reality to its material level and then employ quantitative methodologies modeled on the natural sciences. Deeming the moral and spiritual realms inexistent or irrelevant, Western social sciences have not developed the tools to understand these realms, which he argues ought to be studied in their own right as an integral element of social reality. (2) Western social sciences present a false claim of objectivity, and, by implication, a false claim of universalism, because, having reduced reality to its material level, they assume that

a distanciated, objective, value-neutral observer can discover the laws of social reality. Al-Faruqi maintains that, unlike the objects of natural science, non-empirical objects of the social sciences (values, attitudes, hopes, etcetera) can only be properly perceived by an observer who "actively empathizes or 'emotes' with the data, whether for or against them… The subject's attitude toward the data determines the outcome of the study." Not only is the claim of value-neutrality unsustainable, the researcher actually needs to be *empathetic* to the data for the data to speak; otherwise, the data remain silenced and invisible to the researcher. Al-Faruqi is most critical of the presumed universalism of the West's knowledge; he writes that the genuine social scientist "will never claim to be objective when he in fact is prejudiced, to be complete and thorough when he is in fact reductionist, to talk about human society when he is in fact referring to Western society, of religion when he is in fact referring to Christianity, or of social and economic laws when he is in fact referring to common practices of some Western societies" (3). The division of social knowledge into the humanities and social sciences violates the Islamic principle of the unity of truth, because questions of ultimate value become the sole domain of the humanities, which poses its inquiry in purely subjectivist and individualist terms. The social sciences, in effect, no longer deal with questions of ultimate value, "except those based on instrumental ends" (al-Faruqi 1981b: 15).

General Principles of Islamic Social Knowledge

Like Nasr, al-Faruqi invokes the notion of *tawhid* as a guiding principle of reconstruction. However, unlike Nasr's view of *tawhid* as leading to a renewed metaphysics in the hierarchical formulation of knowledge, in al-Faruqi's project, *tawhid* is regarded in much more concrete terms as a justification for the reunification of the humanities and the social sciences. Moreover, whereas Nasr views *tawhid* as simply entailing a rediscovery of the primordial bond between the Sacred and humanity—a rediscovery that can be made by scholars from any of the World Religions—for al-Faruqi, only Muslim scholars can accomplish the task of reunification of knowledge, because, for him, Islam is the only religion that synthesizes Reason with Revelation. Reconceived as a theoretical framework, for al-Faruqi *tawhid* requires the unification of empirical and normative knowledge, that is, knowledge of what *is* the case with knowledge of what *ought* to be the case, so that human beings may embody

God's Will on earth and so that social reality may strive to actualize the Divine Norm (al-Faruqi 1988: 38–53). Just as outer nature and human nature embody the Divine Norm, which is discernible by Reason and disclosed by Revelation, so the reunification of the humanities and the social sciences needs a new framework, one that strives to discern the divine pattern and mandate of human vicegerency (*khilafatullah*, i.e., the task of embodying God's Will on earth).

The unity of knowledge thus erases the division between the humanities and the social sciences, as both deal with man at the individual and *ummatic* levels (al-Faruqi et al. 1982: 17). Al-Faruqi uses the term *ummatic* to emphasize the civilizational basis of knowledge. Unlike the humanities, which take the individual subject as the foundation of knowledge, and unlike the social sciences, which reduce the concept of society to the nation-state, al-Faruqi's Islamization of Knowledge envisions a broader unit of analysis at the level of the *ummah*. The Arabic term *ummah* refers in a specific sense to the community of Muslims, but it was also used by Prophet Muhammad in a more general sense to refer to the confederation of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian tribes in Madinah.[13] Hence, al-Faruqi (1989 [1984]) extends this concept into a unit of analysis of religion-based civilizations. *Ummah*, thus, becomes a meso-level concept that bridges micro-level units of analysis such as the family, in place of ethnicity, and macro-level concepts such as humanity, in place of the nation-state, as foundational units of analysis (al-Faruqi et al. 1982: 53).

The Work-Plan

The name of the project, the Islamization of Knowledge, is *à propos* because, in what proved to be one of the main causes of its undoing, al-Faruqi paid less attention to his general principles and far more to the work-plan (1988: 30). His philosophical views were overshadowed by his concern for immediate practical reform, which accounted for his administrative and organizational zeal. Indeed, his concern that Muslim societies needed to move from espousing rhetoric to the implementation of specific proposals for reform led him to outline a detailed 12-step work-plan for the process of "Islamizing" Western knowledge. The work-plan outlines how Muslims can actively integrate modern knowledge "into the corpus of Islamic legacy by

eliminating, amending, re-interpreting, and adapting its components, as the worldview of Islam and its values dictates" (al-Faruqi 1988: 53–63). In practical terms, this means that Muslim scholars must gain mastery of modern, Western disciplinary knowledge and of the Islamic legacy, for which new anthologies of traditional Islamic learning are required, and then disseminate their syntheses by producing university level textbooks for each discipline.

Ghamari-Tabrizi (2004b: 67 and 80, fn. 4) notes al-Faruqi's indebtedness to Heidegger's and Scheler's phenomenology, which enabled al-Faruqi to articulate a critique of Western instrumental rationality. However, al-Faruqi's dialogue with Western social thought goes back even further and more directly to Dilthey, as the discussion in Chapter 4 reveals.

Al-Faruqi's critique of the positivist model of the social sciences is clearly beholden to Dilthey's hermeneutic conception of the *Geisteswissenschaften,* but he never openly acknowledges the extent of his dialogue with Dilthey. Al-Faruqi (1981b: 12) concedes that until Dilthey's "sociology of knowledge,"[14] the Western social sciences had denied their own situatedness and biases, but his rejection of Romanticism leads him to conveniently ignore the Romanticist biases of much of Dilthey's critique of the positivist model of the social sciences. More importantly, he completely ignores the entire interpretive counter-current, exemplified by Dilthey and to a lesser extent by Weber's *verstehende Soziologie,* as if it did not exist.

Al-Faruqi's strong defense of Reason and rejection of Sufism oppose the shift to intuitive forms of knowledge, in the manner of the early reformers. In a way somewhat similar to Dilthey's inability to completely break free of the Kantian tradition, despite al-Faruqi's criticisms of the early reformers, their heritage influences him too deeply. The reformist current influences him so much that his view remains heavily stained with the residue of the positivism of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century thought. It is not surprising, then, to note the alarming similarity to Auguste Comte's pronouncement that sociologists would become the priests of the new positive stage of human history when al-Faruqi claims that "[a]s guides and leaders endowed with clear perception of the Muhammadan vision, of the wisdom the fathers displayed in their figurizations, and of the knowledge of modern realities, the Muslim social scientists are the *ulama* of the *Ummah* today" (al-Faruqi 1981a: 6, see also Roy 1994: 208, fn. 4).

Analyses of the Projects

Although al-Faruqi's Islamization of Knowledge and Nasr's project of re-enchantment coincide on a few generalities, they diverge on many others. Their projects converge on the point that the most pressing challenge of modernity is its corrosiveness to religious cosmology, in particular an Islamic cosmology rooted in the extrapolated, comprehensive notion of *tawhid*. According to both projects, modern analytical knowledge fragments our understanding of the human condition and severs the sacred ties that bind all of creation. Moreover, since the production of modern knowledge does not occur even within a comprehensive, holistic secular framework, let alone a religious worldview, the knowledge that is produced is partial and superficial and contributes to meaninglessness. In this respect, their diagnoses converge with Weber's, as Chapter 5 will demonstrate, though their respective prescriptions are remarkably different.

Notwithstanding a general agreement on the need for reconstruction, al-Faruqi and Nasr disagree on what constitutes the most important influences on modern knowledge. As noted earlier, al-Faruqi blames Romanticism's privileging of particularism, which counteracted the universalist ideals of the Enlightenment. Hence, al-Faruqi argues that, although the social sciences continued to espouse a putative objective universalism, this only concealed the particular biases and prejudices that actually came to animate the social sciences. Thus, al-Faruqi is not critical of universalism per se. In fact, he is not arguing against a situated, particularistic Western social science and for an equally situated and particularistic Islamic social science. Rather, he seeks to displace the former by what he proposes is an authentically universal form of knowledge, since, for al-Faruqi, Islam is the only religion that can put Reason and Revelation on an equal footing (al-Faruqi et al. 1982: 42).

Although I disagree with Roy's (1994) overall assessment of the projects on reconstruction as incursions of fundamentalism into academia, he is certainly correct in pointing out that al-Faruqi's insistence on the rationality of religious prescriptions "is a sign that modernity has worked its way into the very heart of Islamist discourse, which is so rationalist that it ends up denying its own religious practices" (Roy 1994 [1992]: 21). Additionally, al-Faruqi's attempt at the unification of knowledge in the name of *tawhid* reveals a flattened conception of knowledge. Unlike Nasr, who regards a sacred metaphysics as the culminating and integrating science in a hierarchical

framework, al-Faruqi's conception of the reunification of knowledge simply conflates different disciplines into one. There is a great difference between the holistic, integrating framework put forward by Nasr and the undifferentiated unity put forward by al-Faruqi. In fact, al-Faruqi's desire to overcome the fragmentation of knowledge is partly motivated by his political quest to overcome the ethnic and linguistic differences among Muslim communities, especially immigrant Muslim communities in the West (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2004b, 1998),[15] and to unify them in the name of a global *ummah* (Roy 1994: 72).

Al-Faruqi's quest for a narrowly defined unity, as opposed to a more loosely conceived holism, is at the heart of his criticisms of the Western social sciences for their emphasis on the internal differentiation and segmentation of communities, through the application of categories such as class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Although there is some merit to al-Faruqi's criticism of the excessive reliance upon the nation-state as the foundational unit of analysis in the liberal social sciences, his polemical treatment leads him to ignore those currents of thought within the Western social sciences, such as Immanuel Wallerstein's Marxist-inspired World-Systems Analysis, that also reject the liberal reliance upon the nation-state. However, unlike World-System Analysis, al-Faruqi appears to want to turn to totalities such as the *ummah* without investigating its internal dynamics. He does not seem to realize that it would be possible to reveal internal dynamics, differentiation, and segmentation without denying the validity of the more encompassing category of the *ummah*. Rather than simply denying the validity of micro-level units of analysis such as the individual that are smaller than the family, and rather than simply denying the legitimacy of the nation-state as an empirical unit of analysis, al-Faruqi ought to have indicated how these concepts fit into the larger pattern of an *ummah,* or indeed into the larger unity of the cosmos. As we shall see in the next chapter, what makes Ibn Khaldun's fourteenth-century work so relevant to us today is that, despite acknowledging religious, linguistic, and environmental/racial[16] differences in the formation of human communities, Ibn Khaldun is able to propose a theory of group solidarity that integrates these differences into a holistic analysis of large-scale societies. In contrast, al-Faruqi's " 'Islamic sociology' is not one that would adopt an Islamic perspective and values, but one that would deny itself a methodological deconstruction of its object: it is a contradiction in terms" (Roy 1994 [1992]: 72–73).

Ironically, al-Faruqi criticized the early reformers for their support of Westernization, which they regarded as a shortcut on the road

to progress, yet he was so driven by the practical, immediate implementation of a work-plan that he failed to understand that it, too, essentially leads to a dead end. Putting the work-plan into practice meant that Islamization of Knowledge was largely reduced to deriving Islamic concepts for already existing theories and ideas. While employing genuinely new concepts is certainly the task of a new framework, in the Islamization of Knowledge project it often amounts to no more than the substitution of Arabic terms for pre-existing Western concepts.[17] There is little point in substituting Arabic terms for what is already adequately described in standard social science concepts, unless something truly different is added. Hence, the project often amounts to no more than a reactionary quest for the Islamization of existing disciplines. In effect, the project has produced very little in the way of radically different knowledge, because its disciples have been too preoccupied with attempts to Islamize existing disciplinary forms than with attempting new worldviews of knowledge (Sardar 1989b: 4–5).

The *Ijmali* critique, led by Ziauddin Sardar (1989b: 4–5) and Parvez Manzoor of the Islamization of Knowledge project, points out that al-Faruqi's desire to Islamize the existing disciplines of the social sciences and humanities begins from the wrong premise and, hence, indicates an uncritical assimilation of much of the ontological *and* epistemological presuppositions of modern disciplines.[18] From the *Ijmali* (holistic) point of view, since disciplines develop, evolve, and have meaning only within a particular worldview, the accusation of bias against the Western social sciences is misplaced for, as Taylor (1985) also argues, these sciences serve the needs of Western society for its self-understanding. Rather than Islamizing existing disciplines, the reconstruction of knowledge must begin by reconceptualizing an Islamic worldview and evolving new disciplines geared to fulfilling the needs of Muslim societies and cultures (Sardar 1989c: 52; *cf.* Rahman 1982, 1988).

Nativist *Ressentiment* or Global Dialogue?

In one of their early articles, Mona Abaza and Georg Stauth (1990 [1988]),[19] perhaps the two most persistent critics of the literature on reconstruction of knowledge, argue that the construction of alternative local knowledges in the search for authenticity—that is to say, the move toward the indigenization of social science—has long been

part of global structures. Indigenization programs are, thus, trapped in, and are largely a product of, the globalizing dimension of modernity. Thus, according to Abaza and Stauth, the Muslim protagonists of reconstruction seem not to be aware that they are part of a global cultural system that itself calls for the essentialization of local truths, which takes place firstly by Orientalist discourses and secondly by the "going native" of the natives themselves. For instance, Abaza (2002) accuses Nasr of being an Orientalized Oriental, because he draws upon the work of a French Orientalist scholar of Shiism, Henri Corbin.

More recently, Abaza's analysis of the literature on reconstruction is influenced by developments in postcolonial theory. Like Aijaz Ahmad's critique of Edward Said and other postcolonial intellectuals, Abaza (see also Stenberg 1996) focuses on the locations of Nasr, al-Faruqi and other proponents of reconstruction to argue that the debate on reconstruction represents a search for authenticity among Muslim intellectuals in the diaspora who have lost organic connections to their own communities.

Syed Farid Alatas (1995, 1993) is another critic who finds *ressentiment* at the heart of al-Faruqi's and Nasr's respective projects, albeit Alatas is not opposed in principle to indigenist programs in social science, because he accepts the Weberian argument that values do guide the researcher in identifying an object of study. Hence, for Alatas, Third World scholars may rightfully raise different questions and use different concepts for their analyses. But, on the other hand, Alatas accuses al-Faruqi of what the former regards as a wholesale rejection of Western thought and, on the other hand, he accuses Nasr of obscurantism for seeking to return to a reliance on intuition and the logic of medieval science, a logic that has been surpassed by modern scientific reasoning.[20]

That *ressentiment* and the search for authenticity do influence the projects of reconstruction cannot be denied, and Abaza, Alatas, and other critics of these projects help us to understand this. But lumping together the differing positions of al-Faruqi, Nasr, and the *Ijmali* group itself smacks of counter-*ressentiment*. For instance, while Abaza points to Nasr's use of Corbin as a sign of the native's going native, Alatas claims that the projects of reconstruction reject Western thought lock-stock-and-barrel. But these critics contradict themselves. How is it possible that the projects of reconstruction can be critiqued for drawing upon the work of Orientalists, while also be seen as rejecting Western thought altogether?

Instead of lumping together the different projects of reconstruction as merely facile expressions of Muslim nativism, *ressentiment*, and the search for authenticity, and instead of focusing narrowly on the locations and biographies of the intellectuals involved, we would do better to note the internal differences, while reading the debate collectively as a critique of secular-cultural modernity. Only by subduing the post-Enlightenment reflex of ideology critique, which threatens always to impose itself before the Other has had a fair say, and by strengthening our capacity for dialogical understanding, is it possible to notice how the literature on the reconstruction of knowledge points out that the weaknesses of Muslim society can be addressed once modernity is apprehended in formulations broader than economic and colonial dominance, political ideals, and development schemes. Because of their failure to recognize the social theoretical critique implicit in the debate on reconstruction, and because some of the proponents of reconstruction do not acknowledge the extent of their dialogue with internal Western critiques, proponents and critics alike miss the opportunity to engage with these discourses in a broad, open, and sincere manner without letting feelings of *ressentiment* and counter-*ressentiment* overwhelm their intercultural engagement.[21]

Unlike Abaza, Stauth (2002) at least appears to acknowledge the dialogical possibilities of this debate. Stauth (2002: 227) understands that Nasr and Syed Naquib al-Attas (the paternal uncle of Syed Farid Alatas) both assert intuitive knowledge as a form of cultural critique, a higher intellectual concern of ultimate moral norms against Western materialism. Stauth even makes an opening for dialogue when he considers the possibility of new methodology in the cultural sciences and enters into a short dialogue by pointing out that the protagonists of reconstruction largely critique an outdated model of positivistic science but ignore hermeneutically informed models. Similarly, Turner (2003, 1986, 1985, see especially the earliest source) also opens a space for dialogue by acknowledging that secular rationalism cannot be held as a standard by which all other worldviews must be measured. Thus, Turner reads these projects as symptomatic of the challenge that secular rationalism poses to each of the Abrahamic faiths, though not in exactly the same manner. Yet this short dialogical opening is abruptly closed when, as with Abaza, Stauth and Turner regard the proposals as simply an ideological quest for authenticity that is open to political manipulation and strategic power formation. Rather than continuing to engage dialogically with the protagonists' cultural critique and taking seriously the ontological and epistemological

objections to modern social science, Stauth focuses on their genealogies[22] and networks.

From a dialogical point of view, the "going native of the native," so long as it is not a caricature of oneself, is not *necessarily* a problem, since the role of the Other in constituting the Self must be acknowledged. Thus, Nasr is quite open about acknowledging the influence on his thought of those Western sources which are critical of modernity. What the various critics of reconstruction fail to realize is that, even if the diasporic critique of modern knowledge seems to be disconnected from other Muslim constituencies, the critique of modernity may best be launched by those who sit at the interstices of the metropolis and the colony. Moreover, while Nasr certainly exhorts Muslims to return to their tradition, his substantive critique of scientism, and of modernity more broadly, is not meant solely for the benefit of Muslims but is a general defense of traditional conceptions of the Sacred.[23] If the Muslim proponents of reconstruction engage in the language of Western theory, it is not because these intellectuals are working from the metropolis (i.e., have sold out) and have lost their organic connections, but because the language of Western theory is necessary—both in the metropolis and in the colony—to engage in a global dialogue.

The dismissive attitude adopted by the critics prevents each of them from adopting a more nuanced position and preempts any possibility of deeper understanding. Invoking the notion of ideology not only serves to reinforce the primacy of the economic and the political, it also suggests that Muslim proponents of reconstruction are entirely incapable of putting aside their feelings of *ressentiment* (Nietzsche 1967 [1911]; Scheler, 1972 [ca.1910]; Weber 1978 [ca.1914]: 494; Stauth and Turner 1988) and of offering a critique of modernity beyond and outside the scope of imperialism. If the literature on reconstruction is nothing but ideology, then we are back at the beginning: is there no way to move beyond the political?

A Point of Departure

In sum, my purpose in analyzing the projects of reconstruction is to point out that Muslim intellectuals involved in the literature on the reconstruction of knowledge have already been engaged implicitly in a dialogue with Western social thought. This dialogue has been mostly overlooked or treated very cursorily by many Western intellectuals.

Even in those instances where the literature receives sustained attention, it is regarded by critics as an internal dialogue with little relevance for an intercultural dialogue on modernity.

Over the last century, Muslims have responded, and continue to respond, to modernity in diverse and, at times, contradictory ways that run the gamut from an uncritical implementation of modernization to a revivalist return to the Golden Age of Islam. But Muslim attempts at the reconstruction of knowledge, beginning with Iqbal and continuing through to the projects examined here, are signs that Muslims are engaging deeply with the *philosophical* implications of modernity and are beginning to question the hitherto presumed universalism of secular-cultural modernity. Even if, owing to an element of nativism, *ressentiment* and the consequent polemics, Nasr's and, especially al-Faruqi's, projects do not fully appreciate the value of the modern human sciences, the Muslim debate on the reconstruction of knowledge is a useful point of departure for a more sustained dialogue with Western social theory.

The next chapter on Ibn Khaldun examines the ways in which the work of this premodern scholar has been appropriated and misappropriated in this intercultural dialogue on the human sciences.

3

The Putative Modernity of Ibn Khaldun

A Medieval Modern?

The revival of interest in Ibn Khaldun over the course of the twentieth century has been nothing short of phenomenal. Perhaps nothing better represents the appropriation of Ibn Khaldun in mainstream modern scholarship than his mention in a popular sociological theory textbook (Ritzer 1992: 7). Ibn Khaldun has also been trotted out in response to the clash of civilizations (Arnason and Stauth: 2004). Recently, a three-day symposium was devoted entirely to his work, and plans are underway to start an Ibn Khaldun society. More than 600 years after his death, Ibn Khaldun is alive and well.

Too bad he is also largely misunderstood. In this chapter, I begin to answer the crucial question, implied by the debate on the reconstruction of knowledge, of whether a different conception of the human sciences is compatible with a religious, and specifically Muslim, worldview. My point of departure is Ibn Khaldun's famous *Muqaddimah*[1] (1958b), the intriguing work that, contrary to modern, secular expectations of medieval Islamic thought, turns its attention away from a purely theological focus on God's Transcendence to the human role in the creation of social reality. Using Ibn Khaldun's multilayered work, I wish to expand on the problematics examined in the debate on the reconstruction of knowledge, namely the tensions between transcendent and immanent worldviews, between rationality and intuition, and their relations to the empirical study of society and history. I will argue that Ibn Khaldun's fame in the modern era has resulted from a misunderstanding of his empirical theory and a neglect of his ontological and epistemological framework, which posits a hierarchy of different levels of reality and corresponding knowledges. It is the

neglect of this ontological and epistemological framework that leads to exaggerated and often wayward claims of Ibn Khaldun's modernity and secularity. For the *Muqaddimah* not only presents Ibn Khaldun's new empirical science of the social, *ilm al umran*,[2] which he hoped would help scholars distinguish the visible flux of socio-historical conditions from the deep underlying causes of such conditions. It also indicates how he conceived different realms of reality and the different knowledges that pertain to those realities. Hence, a broader reading of Ibn Khaldun's opus and biography provides better insight into the ontological and epistemological framework in which his science of the social fits. Re-embedding that science in its full context allows us to see that, although the *ilm al umran* contains elements of the modern human sciences, those elements are part of a religious framework that imbues them with considerably different meanings than a modern framework of knowledge that examines only empirical reality using a limited range of epistemologies.

More specifically, contrary to the view that Ibn Khaldun's work represents a complete epistemological break with the religious worldview of his time, I argue that the very basis of hierarchical conceptions of different realities and of their corresponding knowledges permitted him to synthesize rationalist and positivist explanation with religious beliefs about God's ways. Ibn Khaldun could put forth a realist and empirical science of the social only because he presumed a hierarchy of different realities to which he applied different epistemologies; it was this openness to different levels of reality to which correspond different ways of knowing that allowed him to maintain a productive tension between transcendence and immanence, between rationality and intuition, between, what we moderns call, the secular and the sacred. Given the postmodern refusal of hierarchical thinking, it may be difficult now to renew Ibn Khaldun's synthesis. Nevertheless, his synthesis makes clear that rationalism, empiricism, historicism, and realism can fit within a religious worldview. His synthesis makes clear, too, the realization that other formulations of the relation between religion and the human sciences are possible.

The *Muqaddimah*, on which Ibn Khaldun's fame rests, contains those very elements—rationalism, positivism, empiricism, realism, and immanent social explanations—which are the hallmarks of the modern human sciences. So remarkable is this work that exaggerated claims, at first raised by European scholars and later by Muslim scholars, have sought to appropriate his science of the social, *ilm al umran*,

as a precursor to many modern human sciences, if not as the first of such sciences.

That a Muslim thinker in the fourteenth century could have analyzed so deeply the social conditions that give rise to political formations and cultural phenomena has been regarded as sufficient evidence of Ibn Khaldun's rationality and secularity, that is to say, of his break with the predominant Islamic worldview. Nathaniel Schmidt (1967 [1930]), one of the first to suggest that Ibn Khaldun was essentially a secular and modern thinker who founded the disciplines of sociology and the philosophy of history, writes that "[e]ven religion, in so far as it manifests itself, he draws within the circle of man's social life" (Schmidt: 214). Kamil Ayad and Erwin Rosenthal[3] soon followed suit (Gibb 1933).

The interest in appropriating Ibn Khaldun to the modern human sciences was so strong that the Orientalist Hamilton Gibb (1933: 28) responded to these exaggerated claims of Ibn Khaldun's "revolt against theology" by arguing, as only an Orientalist could, that the fact that Ibn Khaldun was a Malikite jurist meant that "he did not and could not introduce into his system anything that was logically incompatible with the Islamic standpoint."[4] Gibb was certainly justified in his skepticism of the anachronistic claims that were being made in Ibn Khaldun's name. Still, Gibb's skeptical refusal did not stem the tide. For instance, in an otherwise insightful critique of the colonialist ideology underlying early French translations of the *Kitab al-Ibar*,[5] Yves Lacoste (1984 [1966]) equates Ibn Khaldun's *ilm al umran* with a historical materialist reading of history. Lacoste argues that Ibn Khaldun's dualism in the classification of the religious and philosophical sciences represents a dialectical tension and an epistemological break with prevailing religious thought that eventually gives rise to a full-blown materialist conception of reality.

Of course, the problem for Lacoste, as for other such proponents of Ibn Khaldun's modernity, is how to reconcile a materialist science of the social with Ibn Khaldun's views on mysticism and intuition. Lacoste avoids this problem by simply dismissing Ibn Khaldun's mysticism as the degeneration of old age, and he argues that Ibn Khaldun composed his rationalist and materialist social and political theory in his youthful days when he still strove for power. According to Lacoste, the failure to occupy seats of power led Ibn Khaldun to seek consolation in mysticism in his old age, when, according to Lacoste, he composed those sections of the *Muqaddimah* that deal with his tripartite ontology and epistemology.

In fact, according to his own autobiography (F. Rosenthal 1958, Fischel 1952), Ibn Khaldun composed the entire *Muqaddimah* in a period of five to six months in Qalat ibn Salamah. While he continually revised the work up until 1406, there is no evidence to substantiate the dichotomy of Ibn Khaldun's youthful rationality and feeble mysticism.

While Orientalist motivations and Marxist appropriations have skewed the interpretations of Ibn Khaldun's work, the worst offenders have been nativist Muslim thinkers, who desire to locate the Muslim roots of modernity. Nativist claims of Ibn Khaldun's putative modernity are appealing because they add a non-Western dimension to the history of the human sciences. Muhammad Enan's short biographical and bibliographical commentary was explicitly written in order to present to the Muslim youth "a great original spirit who anticipated the West in laying down the principles of sociology and is still the object of admiration and appreciations by Western research" (1941 [1932]: viii). Worse, however, is the work of Fuad Baali and Ali Wardi (1981), written half a century later. Although their claim is to present Ibn Khaldun from the point of view of the sociology of knowledge, Baali and Wardi are far more motivated to respond to Arnold Toynbee's (1935) lofty appraisal of Ibn Khaldun as a brilliant "lone star" who had neither predecessors nor followers and who rose above his cultural milieu to produce one of the most comprehensive philosophies of history. They wish to respond to Toynbee because implicit in Toynbee's praise of Ibn Khaldun is the condemnation of the entire cultural milieu that gave rise to Ibn Khaldun. Against Toynbee, but in line with Lacoste, Baali and Wardi regard Ibn Khaldun's dualism as the result of a dialectical movement between sacred and secular thought-styles, a bifurcation, they argue, that was already part of the social milieu. Their treatment of Ibn Khaldun leaves much to be desired. Consider this extreme comparison:

> If we are permitted to liken the Sufites' dialectical theory to that of Hegel, Ibn Khaldun can be likened to Karl Marx. Ibn Khaldun believed that society, as well as nature, is ruled by the dialectical process. But he seemed to see in the Sufite dialectic too much spiritualism or idealism to be rightly applied to the actual process of society. Ibn Khaldun took the Sufite dialectic, as Marx long after took that of Hegel, and "stood it on its feet"; that is he took the Sufite theory, deprived it of its spiritualistic coloring, and fixed it anew upon a materialistic, or sociologistic, basis. (Baali and Wardi 1981: 49)

Just as al-Faruqi and other Muslim rationalists such as Manzoor, whom I discussed in the previous chapter, regard mysticism as an alien element that either coincided with or directly led to the decline of early Muslim civilization, so, too, Bali and Wardi argue that only by rejecting the essence of Sufism was Ibn Khaldun able to put forth his social and political theories. Similarly, Muhammad Abed al Jabri (1999 [1994]; 1995 [1994]) maintains that the revitalization of Muslim thought can occur only by re-engaging with the critical rationalist tradition exemplified in Ibn Khaldun's emphasis on inferential evidence (*burhan*). For Abed al-Jabri, too, Ibn Khaldun's work points to an epistemological rupture in classical Muslim thought between the critical rationalist, realist, and historicist epistemology of Muslim thinkers in the Maghreb and the Gnostic-Illuminationist epistemology of Muslim thinkers in the Mashriq (i.e., the eastern parts of the medieval Muslim world). As with al-Faruqi, so with Abed al-Jabri's account there is a strong jingoism that seeks to align rationalism with Arab Muslims and intuition with Persian and other non-Arab Muslims (*cf.* Turki 2002). Again, on this view, Ibn Khaldun's comments on Sufism and intuition, which I discuss below, are either dismissed altogether or else subsumed under the category of religious sciences, which are only relevant to particular communities of faith.

The anachronism of all such claims of Ibn Khaldun's modernity is self-evident. That such claims could be made about Ibn Khaldun is all the more ironic, since he was neither a strictly rationalist philosopher, such as al-Farabi (*ca.* 870–950 CE) or Ibn Rushd (1126–1198 CE), whose religious beliefs might have been doubted, nor a political or cultural revolutionary. Yes, Ibn Khaldun, like Machiavelli afterwards, was a shrewd politician who, as an advisor and diplomat, had access to some of the most influential rulers of his time. But Ibn Khaldun was also a Sufi with a high regard for intuitive and mystical knowledge.[6] Moreover, in Cairo, in the last phase of his life, he was appointed as the chief Malikite Qadi many times over. Thus, Ibn Khaldun's opus and his biography both problematize the exaggerated claims of his rationality and secularity. These claims not only ignore the religious and normative vision that guides Ibn Khaldun's work. More regrettably, they serve to reinforce the strong modernist view that an empirical and scientific understanding of empirical reality can emerge only by breaking with a religious worldview. In order to move beyond these modernist claims and counter-claims, it is necessary to take seriously Ibn Khaldun's ontological framework before turning

to his remarkable synthesis of the secular and the sacred in his new science.

A Hierarchy of Realities, Intellects, and Souls

Ibn Khaldun's (1958b: 411–13) ontological and epistemological framework, which is found primarily in Chapter VI of the *Muqaddimah*,[7] is premised on the idea that human beings have an intuitive awareness of three distinct but interrelated realms of existence. The corollary of these three realms of existence is three different degrees of thinking, or intellects. The lowest is the Discerning Intellect that perceives, via the senses, the realm of matter and animals that exists outside of man. The intermediate realm of existence comprises human souls, of which we become aware "by the fact that we have in us scientific perceptions above the perceptions of the senses" (Ibn Khaldun 1958b, v. 2: 419–20). The corollary to this realm of human souls is the Experimental Intellect that also has perceptions of sense data but which is connected much more with *apperceptions or judgments* that have been obtained through experience; such apperceptions provide the ideas and behaviors that guide social life and political leadership (Ibn Khaldun 1958b, v. 2: 417–19). The intermediate realm of human beings is itself lower than the highest realm of essences, spirits and angels, the existence of which can only be deduced by the influences that such phenomena exert on humans. The highest realm is only accessible to the Speculative Intellect, which combines perceptions of sensory data and apperceptions of social and political life in a special order and under special conditions to provide an entirely new kind of knowledge beyond sensory perception that has no practical activity associated with it. Although the lower two realms of existence become known through observation of the material world and through reflection on man's own existence, it is possible to glimpse the supra-human realm via true (as opposed to confused) dreams. Yet, certainty about the details of this realm is only possible through prophetic knowledge and by faith in religious law (Ibn Khaldun 1958b, v.2: 413 *ff)*.

In a statement that already indicates the lowering of the horizon of his thought, Ibn Khaldun comments that human beings are best able to perceive the intermediate realm of existence, since the lower realm of matter is shared with animals and the higher realm is shared with angels (1958b, v. 2: 420–21).[8] Hence, our knowledge of ourselves attests to both our corporeal and spiritual existence. Yet our

knowledge of our world is never complete, never perfect, because the human soul is subject to constant vacillation between matter and essence, between negation and assertion, and because our knowledge of the nature of the world, knowledge which is mostly acquired through technique, is always from behind the "veil," unlike the direct perceptive vision of the prophets and angels (Ibn Khaldun 1958b, v. 2: 422–23). Human beings may learn to remove the veil through *dhikr* (the remembrance of God), prayer, fasting, abstinence, and devotion, though Ibn Khaldun states that this proves to be extremely difficult, except for prophets, who have a natural inclination to the supra-human realm. The correspondence between the Speculative Intellect and the supra-human realm is obvious: only the prophets of God are able to remove completely the veil to the point of having direct perceptive vision. Thus, the great Chain of Being constitutes an uninterrupted continuum of ascent and descent, and the end of this three-fold process of thinking is "the perception of existence as it is. This is the meaning of human reality" (Ibn Khaldun 1958b, v. 2: 413, 422–23).

It is worth noting that his discussion of the different kinds of intellects, or what I would term three different ways of knowing, corresponds in large measure to his discussion of three types of human souls: the scholarly, the mystical, and the prophetic (1958b, v. 1: 197–202). The scholarly soul is, as a rule, limited by the extent of human corporeal perceptions, though it is able to use thinking in combination with memory and imagination to move toward apperception. The saintly or mystical soul goes beyond knowledge based on physical perceptions by combining them with inward intuitive observations and so moves toward intuitive spiritual intellection, whereas the prophetic soul is able to exchange its humanity altogether for the angelic state and, thereby, bring divine knowledge back to the human realm. We should note here that the distinction Ibn Khaldun is making between acquired and innate knowledge is actually a distinction in the separate levels of humanity. Thus, while humanity is distinguished from animals by our ability to acquire knowledge, our original condition of matter is one of essential *jahilliya*, ignorance. The perfection of the soul, which constitutes our highest humanity, occurs through *the combination of acquired knowledge and innate or intuitive knowledge* that raises man above his base level and allows him potentially to rise to the level of angels.

Although his presentation of the intellects begins from sensory perception, that is, from the act of perception, Ibn Khaldun is careful to point out that, in fact, thinking precedes, *and has priority over*,

action, because it is the intention behind an act that spurs human beings into action.

The Dualism of the Religious and Philosophical Sciences

While the above tripartite formulation of realities and knowledges provides the ontological and epistemological foundations to his science of the social, Ibn Khaldun's *ilm al umran* is based on a further methodological differentiation of the philosophical and religious sciences, a differentiation that is at the heart of the exaggerated claims of his modernity (1958b, v. 2: 436–38). He distinguishes the philosophical or intellectual sciences as coming naturally by man's ability to reflect and perceive and as being general to all human communities on the one hand, and the religious sciences as deriving their authority from a particular revealed religious law which itself presupposes faith on the other(1958b, v. 2: 436–38, and v. 3: 51).

In this, Ibn Khaldun appears to state that there is a methodological distinction between the procedure for discerning knowledge about normative sciences such as religious law and the procedure for discerning knowledge about empirical sciences such as history (1958b, v. 1: 76–77). Whereas the methods for the normative religious sciences may include analogical reasoning (*qiyas*) and verifying the authenticity and integrity of individuals in a narrative chain (*isnad)*, the method of the empirical historical sciences is to verify the purported facts with the known general conditions of human social organization. Hence, the methodological dualism that many commentators point to.

Yet for Ibn Khaldun if history were to remain solely an empirical science, and to focus solely on the changing forms and conditions over time, it would not be able to penetrate into the deeper causes underlying human social organization. Therefore, this suggests that, for Ibn Khaldun, his new science cannot be a non-normative, purely empirical science. Discerning these deep causes requires not only the scholarly soul's (or the Discerning Intellect's) sound knowledge of the *how* and the *why* of historical events but also the speculation and subtle explanations of a mystical soul (or Experimental Intellect). Hence, Ibn Khaldun regards the new science as a "vessel for philosophy and a receptacle for historical knowledge" (1958b, v. 1: 12); and he is clearly pleased at having discovered this new discipline (1958v, v.1: 11; 77–78,

83), which consequently involves deduction, intuition, and empirical verification.

Thus, we have an apparent methodological dualism between the philosophical sciences and the religious sciences that is, in fact, reconciled within his overarching framework. This dualism in Ibn Khaldun's epistemology is a result of one of the defining moments in Muslim intellectual history. In the late-eleventh and early-twelfth centuries, Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (1058–1111) had attempted to reconcile the disputes between the *mutakallimun (*the speculative theologians), the philosophers, and Sufis on the place of rationality, revelation, and intuition (Mahdi 1964 [1957]; Johnson 1981). In terms of theology, al-Ghazzali took the side of Asharite occasionalism (i.e., God's constant creation) as against the Mutazalite view of the freedom of human action and responsibility. Just as importantly, in terms of Sufism, al-Ghazzali sought to reconcile it with Sunni orthodox religious law, since acquiring certainty about revealed truth cannot be achieved merely through reason but needs the insights of intuition. al-Ghazzali sought to provide a theoretical foundation to Sufism and thereby attempted to bring it into the fold of Sunni orthodoxy.

Ibn Khaldun largely follows al-Ghazzali in relegating the religious and philosophical sciences to two distinct realms, but while al-Ghazzali clearly resolved this distinction by privileging theology over and above philosophy, Ibn Khaldun appears at first not to be so explicit. In fact, Ibn Khaldun berates the *mutakallimun* not only for claiming to provide detailed knowledge about the supra-human realm through logical argumentation rather than through appeals to prophetic knowledge or through the removal of the veil by means of *dhikr* (1958b, v. 3: 34–54). Ibn Khaldun also berates them for using logic, which he considers the lowest of philosophical sciences, to bolster their own argument rather than as a means to investigate the very basis of the truth of the articles of faith, as do the philosophers.

However, the flip side of this is that Ibn Khaldun also criticizes the philosophers for assuming that rational demonstration can lead to the perfection of the soul and ultimately to happiness (1958b, v. 3: 246–58). He writes that philosophers who restrict themselves to affirming the intellect and neglect everything beyond it are comparable to those who study physics [in the medieval sense of the discipline] but restrict themselves to affirming the body and disregarding both soul and intellect in the belief that there is nothing beyond the body in God's wise plan concerning existence.

This point constitutes Ibn Khaldun's deepest disagreement with the philosophers. Contrary to the philosophers, Ibn Khaldun is adamant that while rationality is useful in its own sphere, intuition, faith, and adherence to religious law alone provide inexpressible happiness, because they connect man to the supra-human realm and ultimately to God. Prophets of God have pure direct vision, and mystics have an intuitive understanding of God. But for the rest of humanity it is the belief in a transcendent reality and adherence to revealed transcendent laws alone that lead to happiness. Hence, according to Ibn Khaldun, social order is possible in any community so long as it stays true to the laws of nature, human nature, and social organization, which God has put in place. But social order is not enough for happiness and the perfection of the human soul. For that, a community needs to adhere to religious teachings.

Of course, Ibn Khaldun nowhere explicitly comments that Islamic law is the best law or that, among religious laws, it alone brings happiness. He comments only that religious law, which is particular to each community, leads to happiness. As a Qadi, he had to live up to and enforce the ideals of Islamic law (Mahdi 1964 [1957]: 296). However, unlike the prevailing dogmatism of Asharite theology, Ibn Khaldun's originality lay in his recognition that, given the self-evident decline of Muslim civilization and the Christian ascent—Ibn Khaldun refers to reports of the cultivation of sciences and learning in Christian Europe—he was able to perceive the full weight of the Quranic verses that warn Muslims that God will treat them like any other nation on earth if they stray from the natural unalterable "ways of God" (1958b, v. 3: 117–118). That is, he was able to perceive that if Muslims do not keep to the "ways of God," then He will replace them with others.[9]

He disagrees with theologians and philosophers and, in the wake of al-Ghazzali's synthesis of that dispute, does not side completely with one or the other. However, unlike al-Ghazzali, and without severing the connection with the supra-human realm, Ibn Khaldun focuses on the intermediate, earthly realm of human social existence, about which he can say more about the nature of things with certainty using revelation, rational demonstration *and* intuitive speculation.

It is true that Ibn Khaldun's social and political theory is largely devoid of mystical or esoteric explanations or assumptions. Still, this is not sufficient to deny the range of epistemologies that he considers valid. The fixation on the dualistic classification of sciences ignores the tripartite ontology and epistemology discussed above. More

importantly, it ignores the fact that Ibn Khaldun himself points out that, although there is a dualism in the classification of the sciences, the arguments of the philosophers and theologians are concerned with the same domain of ultimate reality, though they need to rely on different faculties of knowing. In fact, the dualism between the philosophical and religious sciences converges in some respects at the highest level since he refers to metaphysics, which is the highest of the philosophical sciences, as "the science of divine matters" (*ilm al-ilahiyyat*) (F. Rosenthal 1958: v. 3: 153, fn. 738a; Ahmad 2003). Ibn Khaldun acknowledges that there is considerable overlap in the topics covered by metaphysics and theology.

The question of the putative modernity of Ibn Khaldun arises because the analytic approach to his work gives undue attention to each particular element, such as empiricism, realism, etcetera. However, what this approach fails to notice is that the arrangement of each particular element in a holistic hierarchical order alters the very meaning of those elements. It is true that empiricism and realism exist in embryonic form in the *Muqaddimah,* but the conceptual whole in which that form exists is very different from the conceptual whole of the modern human sciences, which I discuss in Part III. Mahdi (1964 [1957]: 293–94), one of the few scholars to have fully appreciated this, is apt when he points out that despite the semblance of modernity, Ibn Khaldun was neither an empiricist nor a realist, neither a positivist nor a historicist.

To some extent, the apparent discrepancy between dualism in the classification of the sciences and the tripartite ontology and epistemology rests on the place accorded Sufism in particular and intuitive knowledge more generally. It is true that, in his classification, Ibn Khaldun subsumes Sufism to the religious sciences (1958b, v. 1: 222), because he considers it a specific sub-discipline, applicable only to the Muslim faith. However, the complicating factor here is that *dhikr* is both a general term and a technical Sufi concept, so that many modern scholars have interpreted Ibn Khaldun as subsuming intuitive knowledge to a particular form of religious reasoning, which is suitable only for specific communities.

We get a better sense of Ibn Khaldun's position on intuition and Sufism if we note that, although Ibn Khaldun dismisses and denounces the revolutionary and mystical tenets of Shiism and practically defends Sunni orthodoxy and orthopraxy at every turn, he defends the Sufi practice of *dhikr* as well as the possibility of reaching higher "stations" (*maqam*) and "states" of being (*haal*) (1958b,

v. 3: 77–83). Ibn Khaldun even goes so far as to defend from negative sanction the ecstatic utterances of Sufis while they are in the ecstatic state and when normal language falls short of conveying the mystical experience to people who have not experienced it (1958b, v. 3: 99–103). What Ibn Khaldun does not defend is the ecstatic utterance when it is made in a non-ecstatic, or normal, state of being. Ibn Khaldun is critical of al-Hallaj and other Sufi masters about the excessiveness of their claims, which threaten to erase the boundary between God and themselves and, hence, challenge the Transcendence of God. In all this, Ibn Khaldun largely follows al-Ghazzali's reconciliation of Sunni orthodox Islam and Sufism to the point that Ibn Khaldun concurs with al-Ghazzali's approval of the execution of al-Hallaj.[10]

When we contrast this discussion on Sufism with the earlier discussion on three kinds of intellects and three kinds of souls, it becomes clear that whereas Sufism is a particular sub-discipline of the religious sciences, Ibn Khaldun regards mysticism and intuitive knowledge as a third mode of knowing in its own right. For instance, in his discussion of various kinds of supernatural perception, Ibn Khaldun writes:

> [W]hen the essence of (the soul) has materialized in actuality, the soul has two kinds of perception, as long as it remains in the body: one through the organs of the body, for which the soul is enabled by the corporeal perceptions, and the other through its essence, without any intermediary… By means of corporeal perception, for which the senses were originally created, they always draw the soul to the external. Frequently, however, the soul plunges from the external into the internal. Then, the veil of the body is lifted for a moment, either by means of a quality that belongs to every human being, such as sleep, or by means of a quality that is found only in certain human beings, such as soothsaying or casting (of pebbles, etcetera), or by means of exercises such as those practiced by (certain) Sufis who practice the removal (of the veil of sense perception). (1958b, v. 1: 214–16)

In other instances in the *Muqaddimah,* Ibn Khaldun insists that intuitive, experiential knowledge is not a specifically religious type of knowing; rather, it is a form that is not amenable to rational, logical demonstration as in the intellectual sciences, nor is it bound by the authority of traditional religious sciences applicable to specific communities of faith. For example, he writes that the perceptions of the three disciplines of metaphysics, speculative theology and Sufism are distinct and different (1958b, v. 3: 155).

Ibn Khaldun's emphasis on intuitive thought as a third mode of knowing is even more pronounced in his treatise on Sufism, *Shifa al-Sail li tahdhib al masail* (*The Healing of the Seekers*) (1958a). Although there is a debate about whether the *Shifa* was written prior to or after the *Muqaddimah*, there is consensus that it was written some time between 1374 and 1376. In any case, there is no major difference in the *Muqaddimah* and the *Shifa* vis-à-vis Ibn Khaldun's treatment of intuition as a means of knowledge (Lakhsassi 1996; Shehadi 1984). The *Shifa* is a more sympathetic and supportive treatment of Sufism as a way of knowing and way of life "in which the searcher prepares himself for a state that yields intuitive experiences of the spiritual world that cannot be put in language" (Shehadi 1984: 268). In the *Shifa*, Ibn Khaldun addresses the question of whether it is possible to attain mystical knowledge without the help of a Sufi master leading the initiate on the difficult path. In answering this question, Ibn Khaldun distinguishes three stages along the Sufi path of knowledge, and he argues that, whereas learning from Sufi manuals may be sufficient for the first two stages, a spiritual guide is needed for the last stage (Lakhsassi 1996: 356–57, 362, fn. 7). The intuitive knowledge made possible by mysticism, the rational knowledge made possible by empirical observation, and the religious knowledge made possible by faith in the authority of revelation and religious law do not pose a real problem for Ibn Khaldun, because he does not advocate one way of knowing for all of existence.

In view of his ontological and epistemological framework, and given the statements in the *Muqaddimah* about the distinctiveness of intuitive thought, it is clear that it is possible to reconcile the dualism of his classification of knowledge (of intellectual versus religious sciences) with his tripartite hierarchical divisions of intellects, souls, and realms of existence. Having extricated the apparent dualism of the classification of the sciences from a sterile focus on Ibn Khaldun's putative secularity and modernity by re-embedding it in Ibn Khaldun's pluralistic ontology and epistemology, we may now delve fully into the content of Ibn Khaldun's *ilm al umran*.

Asabiya as a Secular Philosophy of History?

Since Ibn Khaldun's *ilm al umran* is concerned foremost with the nature of social organization, in particular the causes behind the rise and fall of societies, it is often regarded as a purely empirical science,

devoid of religious coloring and a proof of his overwhelmingly rationalist, secular, and this-worldly approach to empirical reality. In the following section, I wish to examine such claims in light of his view of social order and teleology.

In this science of the social, Ibn Khaldun privileges mundane, social explanations based on knowledge of the contemporary conditions of social organization, the principles of custom, and philosophical knowledge into the nature of things over miraculous reports premised on religious traditions—though he does not always discount these, either (1958b, v. 1: 15). The central concept animating his theory of the rise and fall of societies is *asabiya*, group cohesion, which "produces the ability to defend oneself, to offer opposition, to protect oneself, and to press one's claims. Whoever loses his group feeling is too weak to do any of these things" (1958b, v. 1: 289). According to Ibn Khaldun, the waxing and waning of *asabiya* is at the root of the rise and fall of societies. Contrary to the theological view that religious law alone provides the basis for social order, Ibn Khaldun points out that societies *without* revealed religious law constitute the majority of the world's inhabitants, and yet they, too, have social order(1958b, v. 1: 92–93, 390). He comes to realize, then, that the fundamental basis of social order is not religious law, but *asabiya*.

Two examples of his use of *asabiya* particularly reflect the centrality of the concept in his reading of the vicissitudes of Muslim history. After the death of the Prophet Muhammad and the rule of the four "Rightly Guided Caliphs,"[11] leadership of the Muslim community increasingly took on a temporal and monarchical basis and the distinction between the Rightly Guided Caliphs and subsequent caliphates became central to Sunni Islam's division of history. Although Sunni historians defended these latter caliphates as necessary to counter the threat of *fitna*, social and moral anarchy, they regarded them as having yielded to and indulged in the baser aspects of power and rule. In effect, the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs, with a few exceptions, such as Umar bin Abdul Aziz (680–720), were seen as blameworthy. While Ibn Khaldun does not necessarily disagree with this view, he does defend the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates to a certain extent, on the basis that the expansion of the Muslim empire had diluted the communal solidarity of the relatively small Muslim community; hence, the desert and nomadic roots of the small community gave way to a sedentary culture, the natural consequence of which is the emergence of temporal and monarchical rule, and the luxurious life that goes with it.[12]

Similarly, when Ibn Khaldun considers the *ahadith* regarding the coming of the messiah [*al-Mahdi*], he suspends judgment on the question of their veracity(1958b, v. 2: 156–200). Rather, he argues that even if the reports concerning al-Mahdi were true, his appearance and success would be constrained by socio–historical conditions, foremost of which is that al-Mahdi must appear among a people who have a strong sense of *asabiya*. Ibn Khaldun writes:

> The truth one must know is that no religious or political propaganda can be successful, unless power and group feeling exist to support the religious and political aspirations and to defend them against those who reject them, until God's will with regard to them materializes . . . If it is correct that a Mahdi is to appear, there is only one way for his propaganda to make its appearance. He must be one of them [the people], and God must unite them in the intention to follow him, until he gathers enough strength and group feeling to gain success for his cause and to move the people to support him. (1958b, v.2: 195–96)

From these two examples alone, it is possible to understand that the difference between an "objective" social theory and an explanation of social conditions grounded in religious presuppositions may not be as great as is assumed. Ibn Khaldun's defense of the legitimacy of the post-Rashidun caliphates, rooted in the weakening of *asabiya* and the rise of a sedentary culture, does not contradict the theological defense based on the threat of *fitna*. Given Ibn Khaldun's aversion to the revolutionary temper of Shiism, his conclusion and the reasoning underlying that conclusion are actually fully in line with mainstream Sunni thought, since the benefits of a sedentary culture for the development of the sciences and crafts can aid in the perfection of the human soul, so long as it conforms to religious law.

It is true that Ibn Khaldun never presents God's direct involvement as a general principle of historical change, yet he does invoke divine agency in different ways in the *Muqaddimah* (Shehadi 1984: 272–79). First, there are the formulaic statements, often parts of verses from the Quran, that are presented in the *Muqaddimah* at the end of innumerable paragraphs and sections.[13] As Schmidt (1967 [1930]: 24) suggests, these do not explain anything in particular and are not intended as rivals of the scientific explanations that generally precede such formulaic insertions. Nevertheless, such formulaic statements indicate Ibn Khaldun's acceptance of the applicability of general, universal truths, revealed in the Quran, to particular events.

Second, there are other instances when Ibn Khaldun does invoke God's agency in particular events. For example, when Ibn Khaldun argues that God permits certain groups to achieve power over others and at other times permits the fall of a particular ruling dynasty. In such cases, Ibn Khaldun does not invoke divine intervention as an immediate explanation of why a particular event occurred, nor does such intervention undermine the work of scientific history, which sets out to explain why something occurred as it did, and not otherwise. Yet Ibn Khaldun recognizes that the immediate explanation is in keeping with God's will.[14] Most generally, Ibn Khaldun argues that, when corruption and immorality becomes widespread in the cities and nation, God permits the dynasty to be ruined (1958b, v. 1: 293; 2: 294; see also v. 1: 83). Here, he cites the Quranic (17: 16) verse "When We want to destroy a village, we order those of its inhabitants who live in luxury to act wickedly therein. Thus, the word becomes true for it, and we do destroy it." He explains this verse by elaborating on the mechanism, which is luxurious customs that people become so used to that their wealth is not enough to satisfy their desires, so that they fall into other immoral behavior in order to acquire more wealth.

Direct, immediate moral retribution is not generalized as a principle of historical change, but the weakening of *asabiya* is a gradual consequence of failing to adhere to God's will, which is manifest in the nature of social organization.

It is also important to note that Ibn Khaldun does not simply treat religion as just another variable that goes into the mix in giving rise to group feeling. On the contrary, he regards religion as the most important element in uniting a group. "[T]he reason for this is that religious coloring does away with mutual jealousy and envy among people who share in a group feeling, and causes concentration upon the truth. When people (who have a religious coloring) come to have the (right) insight into their affairs, nothing can withstand them, because their outlook is one and their object one of common accord" (1958b, v. 1: 305–07). After citing a number of cases, he strengthens his argument by pointing to the case of the Zanatah, who were more numerous, had a deeper-seated desert attitude and a stronger group feeling, but were unable to defeat the Masmudah so long as the latter had a religious coloring to their group feeling. Eventually, when the restraining and unifying influence of religion had ceded, the Masmudah lost power to the Zanatah (Ibn Khaldun 1958b, v. 1: 320–22).

In other words, even though Ibn Khaldun offers scientific explanations without always resorting to direct divine intervention as a general explanation, God's agency does make itself felt in human history not simply at a meta-causal, meta-scientific level but also more directly, because the mechanisms that He has put in place apply to all communities. God may not direct the course of human history as such, but He does create the conditions for historical and social change to occur (Lakhsassi 1996: 355). For example, Ibn Khaldun discusses the case of religious revolutionaries who, hoping for divine reward, seek to change the immoral social conditions of their society but are often killed, and will even be unrewarded by God, because He had not destined them for the activities they undertook. Ibn Khaldun writes that "[God] commands such activities to be undertaken only where there exists the power to bring them to a successful conclusion... Similarly, prophets in their religious propaganda depended on groups and families, though they were the ones who could have been supported by God with anything in existence, if He had wished, but in His wisdom He permitted matters to take their customary course" (1958b, v. 1: 323).

Ibn Khaldun does give precedence to human actions as the immediate "antecedent" (Shehadi 1984) of socio-historical conditions rather than to Divine Intervention, but he neither ignores the formal and final causes nor denies the moral aspect of history. The strengthening and weakening of *asabiya* is a mechanism through which social groups gain power and then eventually decline. But to confuse *asabiya*, a mechanism, with a final cause is impossible in Ibn Khaldun's hierarchical ontology. Furthermore, God is not so transcendent or removed from the intermediate realm that He ceases to have any meaningful role. Ibn Khaldun's emphasis on *asabiya* clearly does not negate the divine role in history. On the contrary, the normative implication of his theory of the rise and fall of societies is that while there is a plan to the world, it is beyond the scope of the intellectual, rational sciences to decipher.

The confusion surrounding Ibn Khaldun's work arises precisely because most of his modern commentators have lost touch with the hierarchical conception of knowledge, with its presupposition of different orders of reality and their corresponding knowledges, in which Ibn Khaldun's analysis of the empirical causes of history was embedded. It is useful to discuss Ibn Khaldun's view about the external and internal causes of military victory. He criticizes al-Turtushi, the historian whom he elsewhere praises for having deep insights into social

organization, for paying attention only to the number of fighters in each camp and ignoring the effect of group feeling (1958b, v. 2: 88). He adds that the number of fighters and group feeling belong to the external causes of victory. "How could such things guarantee victory, considering that we have just established that none of them is a match for the hidden causes, such as ruse and trickery, or for the celestial factors, such as divine terror and defection?" asks Ibn Khaldun. It is noteworthy that Ibn Khaldun includes defection among celestial factors, since it is God who puts fear into the hearts of a divided army.

Between Science and Theology

Instead of reading history backwards through our modern lens, is it not more reasonable to read Ibn Khaldun with a view to his own intellectual inheritance, as Mahdi (1964 [1957]) argued almost half a century ago? If we are to get past Orientalist, Marxist, and nativist discussions of Ibn Khaldun that reduce the complexity of his thought, we will need to open up to his work in a hermeneutic and dialogical manner that takes seriously the whole opus rather than restricting the focus to the empirical and rational aspects of his science of the social. It is necessary to go beyond Ibn Khaldun's empirical theory of *asabiya* and to engage hermeneutically, dialogically even, with his historical context and the ontological and epistemological framework in which his work was embedded.

The fixation on the dualistic classification of sciences ignores the fact that Ibn Khaldun himself points out that, although there is a dualism in the classification of the sciences, the arguments of the philosophers and theologians are concerned with the same domain of ultimate reality, though they need to rely on different faculties of knowing. In effect, Ibn Khaldun acknowledges that there is, in the last instance, considerable overlap in the topics covered by secular metaphysics and theology.

My point is that *Ibn Khaldun did not need to draw the strong modern binary between secular and religious knowledge in order to develop profound insights into the nature of the social.* Rather, it is the classical, medieval conception of realities and their corresponding knowledges that allows him to synthesize religious metaphysics with this-worldly empirical findings. It may be difficult to renew such a synthesis now, given postmodern sensibilities and refusal of hierarchies,

but perhaps our sensibilities are also now open to different synthetic, holistic possibilities.

Ibn Khaldun's work demonstrates that the lowering of the horizon of thought is not specifically a modern or secular phenomenon. It also demonstrates that a focus on the social can and does occur within the framework of religious, and more specifically Islamic, thought. However, unlike the permanence of the lowering of the horizon of thought in the modern human sciences, in this case the lowering the horizon of thought is never a permanent maneuver. There is constantly a movement of ascent and descent within a hierarchical framework so that the empirical human social realm is never cut off from the meaning imbuing the supra-human realm. Yet even the modern quest to permanently lower the horizon of thought and the desire to sever all metaphysics are never complete, never entirely possible.

As we will see in Part III, Weber's (and for that matter, Marx's) insistence on the social as a field of knowledge in its own right comes at the price of religion. Even though Weber concedes that the study of economic, material conditions of social reality is a mere methodological expedient, a technical convenience for the sake of specialization, the general tone underlying Weber's opus is the denial of other realms of human existence and the knowledges that pertain to those other realms. However, unlike Weber's formulation of social science (and of the other founding fathers of sociology, as well), Dilthey's conception of the *Geisteswissenschaften* exhibits strong dialogical possibilities with Ibn Khaldun's science of the social, because Dilthey likewise remains committed to holistic thought, albeit in the hermeneutic rather than hierarchical mode. Ibn Khaldun's delineation of his *ilm al umran* as a discipline in its own right did not lead him to deny the validity of other modes of knowing. Nor does the nobility and power of explanation of his science lead him to a monopolistic claim for his discipline.

III

Western Debates on Social Knowledge

4

Dilthey and the Problem of Immanence

The *Geisteswissenschaften*

In Part II, I tried to establish an internal dialogue on knowledge between contemporary Muslim critics and Ibn Khaldun, with a particular focus on the latter's conception of the relation between philosophy and history. In this chapter, I would like to address the *inter*cultural dialogue by turning to the work of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), "the philosopher of the human sciences" (Makreel 1992 [1975]), who is perhaps best known for his critique of historical reason. In attempting to complete the critique of knowledge initiated by Kant, Dilthey saw his task as one of developing an epistemological foundation to the human sciences.

Dilthey appears, at first glance, to be a somewhat obscure figure to bring to an intercultural dialogue between Islamic social thought and the modern human sciences. It is true that Dilthey largely, if not altogether, ignored non-European intellectual traditions, and, even within European thought, as a biographer, historian, and philosopher, his attention did not stray far from the German tradition, except to note with dismay the developments in French and British sociology. Indeed, the cultural insularity of Dilthey's philosophical engagements is noteworthy, given that Dilthey appreciated the hermeneutic, philological concern with the foreign in German Romanticism; moreover, while Dilthey was propagating the notion of worldviews late in his life, other German intellectuals, such as Nietzsche and Weber, were increasingly either drawing upon or incorporating the non-European world in their work.

Yet it is worth bringing Dilthey to this intercultural dialogue, because he is a crucial interstitial figure in Western thought

between the universalism of the Enlightenment and the particularism of Romanticism, between the classical heritage of eighteenth century German Idealism and the relativist, nihilist tendencies of late-nineteenth century thought, which finds its echo in postmodern thought. Dilthey's work has been widely influential to various currents of twentieth century Western interpretive social thought, most directly, of course, to the ontological reconfiguration of understanding in Heidegger and Gadamer, notwithstanding their significant disagreement with Dilthey. Although some have criticized Dilthey for being unable to resolve the tensions between the various currents that he mediated, it is precisely the interstitial, transitional, and paradoxical nature of his work that makes it apt for this intercultural dialogue, because it provides an excellent point of access to the different currents that constitute the human sciences. The tensions, oppositions and contradictions of the Enlightenment and Romanticism are embodied in Dilthey's thought, and he tries desperately to hold onto the tension without giving way to one or the other. Thus, in Dilthey's thought, the intersection of the objectivist, universalist aspirations of Enlightenment science and the subjectivist, particularist Romanticist experience of being can be seen in full view.

My purpose in this chapter is not to survey the entire corpus of Dilthey's work, which would, in any case, be impossible, since Dilthey was a prolific albeit somewhat unsystematic writer. Rather, I seek to bring Dilthey's thoughts on the human sciences to bear on the Muslim critiques discussed earlier.[1] Dilthey's central problem appears to be the question, "Can there be a conception of the human sciences that is not rooted in positivism or empiricism but can still produce objective knowledge?" Although Dilthey never seems to have wavered in responding *yes* to this question, for he was convinced of the difference between the *Naturwissenschaften* and the *Geisteswissenschaften*, that is between the natural and human sciences, the subsequent question of what the basis for such objectivity could be occupied him for the last 20 years of his life, and he struggled, perhaps in vain, to answer it. The writings referred to above ostensibly define Dilthey's lifelong project of providing an epistemological foundation for the human sciences; and yet, as with Ibn Khaldun's conception of different realities and their corresponding knowledges, I will seek to demonstrate that Dilthey's writings also contain the inchoate ontological presuppositions that frame his epistemological project. To speak of Dilthey's epistemological position without sorting out his ontology as

elaborated in his philosophy of life is to put the cart before the horse, or, perhaps more accurately, it is to have the cart without the horse that drives it. The fact that Dilthey has not worked out his ontology as elaborately as his epistemology should not prevent us from analyzing these problems in his work. In fact, Dilthey's work helps us to realize that ontology and epistemology are not different branches of philosophy, but that they both impact on our understanding of the world, as the Muslim critics also assert. Among the English-reading public, Dilthey has largely been read in terms of his Kantian critique of historical reason; however, I am far more concerned with demonstrating how Dilthey's philosophy of life, which derives from Romanticism and privileges holism and meaning above the fragmenting and analytical tendencies of abstract thought, impinges on his epistemological project.

My aim, then, is to disclose the possibilities for a dialogue between Islamic social thought and the modern interpretive human sciences vis-à-vis the place of metaphysics. Yet, just as I indicated in the chapter on the theory of dialogue, any such dialogue must deal with the legitimate differences that emerge. In this context, this difference means facing up to Dilthey's avowed, but never fulfilled, rejection of metaphysical reasoning and embrace of immanence not just in his formulation of the human sciences but as a more generalized historical phenomenon. Despite Dilthey's genuine openness to contradictory currents of thought, he is doctrinaire, nay *almost* dogmatic, in insisting that with the rise of the human sciences there is the closure of metaphysical thinking. I emphasize the word "almost" because his adamant refusal to consider the continued validity of metaphysics is qualified only to the extent that, with the recognition of man's finitude, he admits the persistence of a metaphysical mood. This metaphysical mood would seem to be an intrinsic element in the human condition, and although his historicist reading suggests that even this little sliver of metaphysics will pass, Dilthey's work, like other modern conceptions of the human sciences, must inevitably retain a metaphysics of immanence if it is not to lapse into full-blown nihilism. While it would appear that no dialogue is possible between a radically immanent conception of the human sciences and a conception rooted in a transcendent religious vision, the possibility for dialogue between Islamic social thought and modern human sciences exists, since the modern human sciences conceal the metaphysics that remains in their immanent-transcendent vision of the human social world.

The Fall of Metaphysics and the Emergence of the Human Sciences

Like Comte, Dilthey regards the medieval era as one thoroughly infused by metaphysics, such that "all knowledge of the human world was derived from God as its creator" and believes that this provided the unifying bond in medieval societies. Cultural and social transformations such as the emergence of critical philosophy, scientific investigation into causal laws, differentiation and autonomy of cultural systems, all served to rupture this unifying bond. But unlike Comte, who merely asserts the arrival of a positive stage of history, Dilthey argues that metaphysics was not simply cast aside by abstract or scientific argumentation. Rather, in keeping with his characteristic historicism, Dilthey argues that it was the historical development of metaphysics itself that led to the decline of metaphysics and the emergence of the human sciences: scholasticism had so disciplined the medieval intellect to pursue inquiry for inquiry's sake that more and more limited problems came to be posed that could be solved by means of more rigorous methods, in contrast to the cosmological problems of traditional metaphysics (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 190). In other words, the advances of the modern sciences have occurred precisely because of the incremental and limited nature of their formulation of problems. While Dilthey and Comte do seem to agree that metaphysics is the midwife for the birth of the modern sciences, Dilthey argues that metaphysics has not yet completely disappeared, for it is not abstract refutation, as in Comte's assertion of the arrival of the positive stage of history, but a general feeling that leads to the withering away of dogmas (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 175–76). For Dilthey, Comte not only fails to provide the specific historical knowledge of the grand phenomenon of metaphysics, but he also fails to fully recognize and appreciate the long-lasting power and contribution of metaphysics. Dilthey maintains that if eighteenth century critical philosophy has contributed to the decline of metaphysics, Kant has also partly rehabilitated it by limiting its sphere of concern (Bambach 1995: 129–30). Hence, Dilthey points out that the character and situation of metaphysics has changed gradually so that it is now privatized and can no longer serve as the basis for explaining reality in the particular sciences. "The only task remaining for it was that of rounding off the results of the positive sciences in a general worldview" (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 191). That is, the task that remains is to create a focal point around

which the results of the positive sciences could be gathered into a satisfactory general framework. For Dilthey, this limited task yields interpretations of only limited worth. Eventually, Dilthey presumes, even such a limited function of metaphysics will pass away: "Still, [metaphysics] is an instrument that makes things visible, that enriches individuals by means of thought, and that maintains their relations to an invisible framework. This and much that is related to it comprises the new function of metaphysics in modern society . . . *However, even this function of metaphysical systems in modern society can only be a passing one*" (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 192, emphasis added).

Although Dilthey appears to accept the apparent collapse of metaphysics as a *fait accompli* (Plantinga 1980: 159–60), there are important traces in his writings which indicate that he recognizes the continuation of the experience of metaphysics: one tries to relive what the metaphysician has seen and experienced, but one does not take his truth-claims at face value (Plantinga 1980: 158). Dilthey writes that "metaphysics as a science is a historically limited phenomenon, whereas the meta-physical consciousness of the person is eternal" (1989 [1883]: 219). This experience is summed up in the following stirring passage on the persistence of the metaphysical mood. He writes that the metaphysical mood is:

> induced by the immensity of space, the symbol of infinity, by the pure radiance of the stars, which seems to indicate a higher world, but above all by the intelligible order which brings even the simple orbit traversed by a heavenly body into a mysterious but dynamically felt relation to our geometric awareness of space. *All of this is gathered into one mood, the soul is broadened, an intelligible aura of divinity extends all around it into the unbounded.* The feeling cannot be transformed into a demonstrative proof. Metaphysics is silenced—but in the quiet of the night there still rings from the stars, even for us, a harmony of the spheres that the noise of the world merely drowns out, as the Pythagoreans said. *This produces an indissoluble metaphysical mood which undergirds every demonstration and will out live them all.* (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 198, emphasis added)

But now, bereft of the validity of metaphysics, Dilthey agrees with Comte's "social physics" and John Stuart Mill's "moral sciences" that knowledge of the human world must be based on self-reflection and empirical facts. What they have in common, he points out, is that each rejects every transcendental and metaphysical principle for the world of human spirit; each denies knowledge of an unconditional

value, of an absolutely valid norm, of a divine plan, of a system of reason grounded in the absolute; each acknowledges the relativity of all human, historical givens; each sets the task of acquiring objective knowledge of human reality and of the connection of its parts from the material of the given.

However, what Dilthey finds troubling with Comte's positivism and Mill's empiricism is that each of them treats the human social world as though it were no different from the natural world, and in so doing they truncate the reality of the totality of life. While Dilthey never wavers in his quest to ground the *relative* independence of the human sciences from the natural sciences, his view of the degree of independence changes radically over the course of his life, as I will argue later. Despite this very significant shift, it is true that Dilthey maintains the connection of nature and man at some deep, fundamental level so as not to truncate and mutilate the totality of life in our analysis of it. It is this aversion to truncating and mutilating the totality of life that leads Dilthey to reject the positivist and empiricist foundations of the human sciences as proposed by Comte and Mill, respectively. The positivist aspect, which he accepts is justified within its limits, truncates the human sciences, because it only focuses on theorems of uniform behavior. Dilthey's critique of the Enlightenment mode of abstraction is leveled primarily at this mutilation and truncation of reality, for the fundamental mistake of the abstract, Enlightenment approach is to disregard the relation of the abstracted truth to the whole of life and finally to treat these abstractions as realities. He writes that "[o]ur intellect must break the world down into atoms, dismantle it as if it were a machine, in order to know it. But that the world is a whole, the intellect can never derive from these atoms" (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 204).[2]

The benefits of abstract science's seeking to discern laws of uniformity are nothing if science is not guided by understanding and judgment, which are grasped through an appreciation of history. And if, in the past, religious faith and idealistic metaphysics interfered with historical science by giving rise to various philosophies of history, Dilthey is convinced that the system of the human sciences, under the shadow of historical consciousness, itself needs epistemological grounding and conceptual clarification, so as not to become transcendental or metaphysical (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 128). Historical consciousness, always alert to the unique and the singular, needs, for its part, the objectivity of the human sciences so as not to lapse into sheer moral relativism. Relating history to the task of epistemology

leads to the comprehensive investigation of the formation of the historical world in the human sciences and, thereby, to the recognition that objective knowledge is possible in the human sciences (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 137).

History affords us the ability to experience more deeply, to extend understanding more widely, and understanding also widens the range of historical knowledge. This progression demands ever more general truths. The extension of the historical horizon makes possible the formation of ever more general and fruitful concepts (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 167). Thus, historical distance need not be a barrier to understanding, since the range of understanding is constantly being expanded, not only through the accumulation of collective life-experience but also through the wider range of available historical material, the more intensive use of such material, the re-examination of an hitherto uncomprehended past, that is, through history itself (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 182). Historical knowledge of the singular and the articulation of general truths develop in interaction with each other. They become part of one integral point of view. Modern historical consciousness emerged when the concept formation of the systematic human sciences came to be consciously based on the study of historical life and when knowledge of the singular was permeated with an awareness of the systematic (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 167).

Hence, in contrast to Comte's sociology, which Dilthey criticizes for seeking to explain the whole of reality from the limited perspective of one discipline, and to Mill's empiricist moral science, Dilthey attempts first to outline a foundational discipline, a descriptive psychology that would explicate the *relation* among the particular sciences (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 174). For instance, in his (2002 [1910]) *Studies Toward a Foundation of the Human Sciences* Dilthey maintained the link between epistemology and his descriptive psychology by arguing that the psychic-structural nexus has a subjective immanent teleological character that is brought to consciousness by epistemology, that is, a striving toward goals is inherent in the structure of psychic processes, and epistemology helps us to establish whether such a teleology reaches its goal (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 29). The subjective immanent teleological character of the psychic-structural nexus is the basis for selecting what counts as valid knowledge about reality, values and purposes (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 33).

Yet his descriptive psychology, rooted as it is in a material biology, proves unable to cope with emergent cultural phenomena, and Dilthey turns toward hermeneutics as a means of developing an integrative,

holistic framework that can explain how all that we know about the human world fits together.

Dilthey's critique of Comtean sociology arises from his conviction that no particular human science can grasp the whole of socio-historical reality. But that does not mean that the essential holism of reality should not be apprehended. Indeed, even if it always remains elusive, beyond the grasp of the human sciences, Dilthey's project of laying the foundations of the human sciences *is* geared toward apprehending the essential holism of socio-historical reality by designating the relationships among the human sciences. Dilthey concedes that the knowledge produced by particular human sciences has grown slowly and steadily, eclipsing the metaphysical explanations of religions and various philosophies of histories, but what is missing is the integrative function that could reveal the:

> relationships of their truths to the total reality of which they gave only a partial content. Consequently, each particular science must become aware of its relation to the others that have been abstracted from that same reality... We must disclose both what can be conquered by the instruments of knowledge and what resists them and remains behind as irreducible fact. In short, what is necessary is an epistemology of the human sciences—or more appropriately, self-reflection—which can guarantee that the concepts and principles of the human sciences are properly related to reality and to each other and that they are properly grounded in evidence... Only [epistemological self-reflection] can provide the basis for a program in which the particular human sciences can cooperate to gain a knowledge of the whole. (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 143)

We come then to a full-blown hermeneutic analysis of history and the problem of the whole-part relation. Although scientific and historical critique destroyed the metaphysical claims both of theocratic theories of society that linked social institutions with the will of God and of other secular philosophies of history, they did not destroy the holism that is inherent in the metaphysical framework. What distinguishes Enlightenment reasoning from the Romanticist quest for meaning is precisely that the latter still connects its facts in a meaningful whole, as, for instance, in the philological and historical criticism of the Historical School (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 207). Yet Dilthey mediates the two by holding that understanding of a part of history can attain completeness only by relating the part to the whole, just as the universal-historical survey of the whole presupposes an

understanding of the parts. The ideographic and nomothetic relationship between history and other systematic human sciences is a reciprocal, hermeneutic relationship, and it is the most general feature of the structure of the human sciences (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 174–75), since the relationship between whole and parts is found everywhere in history and society. Each part of the historical whole has its significance through its relationship to the whole epoch (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 177); moreover, certain parts lack independence and function only with reference to the whole (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 276).

Knowledge and Holism in Dilthey's *Lebensphilosophie*

"Knowledge cannot go behind life" is Dilthey's (1989 [1883]: 489) well-known argument that life, in all its fullness and totality, is itself the presupposition and foundation of knowledge, that life is accessible to reflection and open to experience, and yet cannot, in itself, be analyzed by knowledge. Even as he argues that the totality of life cannot be analyzed by knowledge, Dilthey remains convinced that the most important task of social thought is to connect the empirical with the normative—that is, *the human sciences must be both descriptive and prescriptive* (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 211). Thus, even in his most materialistic work, such as in his developmental psychology, Dilthey argues that an epistemological foundation for the human sciences must incorporate empirical and moral realms, so that it can deal with three kinds of assertions in the human sciences: (1) facts, which are descriptions of reality as given in perception; (2) theorems, which are explanations of uniform behavior; and (3) expressions of value judgments and prescriptions of rules (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 76). Dilthey argues that facts and theorems are different kinds of statements from value judgments and imperatives; therefore, the human sciences have a two-fold standpoint within them, and it is necessary to recognize both aspects (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 78).[3]

It is precisely the inability of Enlightenment reason to grasp the whole of life that leads Dilthey first toward a developmental psychology and later to hermeneutics as the epistemological base of the human sciences. This is an important shift for our discussion of Dilthey, because it signifies not only a move away from the materialist basis of his psychic reality but also a recognition on Dilthey's part that the human sciences must also be able to deal with emergent cultural

phenomena and the objectification of spirit that is to be found in such phenomena. To be sure, Dilthey still refers to "psychic-life-units" and to "psychic structures," but he no longer reduces the objectification of spirit to psychic reality. The shift from developmental psychology to hermeneutics suggests that studying human character or cultural systems can be done hermeneutically, which is different from studying objects in the natural world, by treating movements, gestures and actions as texts (Rickman 1988).

The shift from descriptive psychology to hermeneutics is not merely an epistemological issue, as most commentators argue. Rather, the shift reflects Dilthey's radicalized view of the essence of the human social world. In other words, it is a shift from the Kantian epistemological question "How do we know?" to the ontological question of the nature of human social reality. It is true that even in his early writings on the human sciences, such as the *Einleitung,* Dilthey is trying to do more than outline an epistemological foundation to the human sciences, by struggling with the question of the *relative* independence of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. But in the *Einleitung* he is still attempting to connect the human social realm to the natural world through the bio-psychic processes that he outlines in his descriptive psychology. In his later writings on the human sciences, such as in the *Aufbau,* although he remains committed to the principle of holism in knowledge, Dilthey clearly develops a far more radicalized view of the relative autonomy of the human social realm and of the corresponding *Geisteswissenschaften,* because he is convinced that the difference between the human and the natural sciences is one not only of attitude but of different natures. For instance, the connection between the human and natural sciences is much stronger in the *Einleitung*, as evidenced by his view that all purposes lie exclusively within the sphere of human spirit, but a purpose seeks its means of realization in the system of nature; hence, the human sciences are conditioned by their knowledge of nature (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 68–69). In the *Aufbau*, by contrast, Dilthey moves toward a more radical, more independent conception of the human sciences and recognizes that this purposive nexus could also be studied in the cultural systems: "The difference between the human sciences and the natural sciences is not just about the stance of the subject toward the object; not merely about a kind of attitude, a method" (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 141). Rather, the nature of the external reality that constitutes the object of the human sciences is radically different from the nature of the object of the natural sciences. Spirit has objectified

itself in the objects of the human sciences; purposes (i.e., teleology) have been embodied in those objects; values have been actualized in them; and understanding grasps the spiritual content that has been formed in them. The fullness and totality of life resonate in the most abstract propositions of the human sciences.

This shift from an epistemological to an inchoate ontological difference is clearly discernible in Dilthey's revised argument that the proper domain of the human sciences is the objectification of the human spirit, which gives rise to an entirely different form of apprehension. Understanding in the human sciences is, thus, different from the direct cognition of the objects of the natural sciences. In contrast to the direct cognition of objects in the natural sciences, in the human sciences the mode of apprehension is understanding, which is an indirect form of knowledge, because the process of understanding does not reduce humanity to an object (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 107–08).

In the *Einleitung* and in two *Studies Toward a Foundation of the Human Sciences,* which were composed prior to the *Aufbau,* Dilthey still locates the individual life-unit as the only proper object of study in the human sciences; however, in the *Aufbau* he recognizes cultural systems, communities, societies, nations, epochs, civilizations, etcetera, as forming a continuum between individuals on the one end and humanity on the other. A spiritual nexus is created in these emergent cultural entities that is completely different from psychic processes (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 107). In the *Aufbau*, and subsequently in the *Plans for a Continuation of the Aufbau*, rather than reducing all such phenomena to their intersections in the individual, he comes to regard all of these emergent categories as concrete historical subjects, carriers of value, rules and purposes that appear to act and suffer like a self, the unity of which can only be separated by abstractions (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 175, 281–83). This is an ontological shift from the objectification of the spirit in material reality to the objectification of the spirit in non-material cultural reality. And yet Dilthey is aware of the problem of regarding these emergent cultural phenomena as objectifications of spirit, since there must be a means of delimiting emergent subjects and a justification for apprehending them as units or as a nexus and as the objects of understanding in the human sciences (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 157). He writes:

> [w]e seek something soul-like . . . And here the great problem arises; certainly all interaction is between psychic life-units, but how do we find souls where the individual soul no longer rules? The most fundamental

> starting point is life and what proceeds from it… We see a first transition in the eighteenth century from the life of the soul to psychology. (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 302)

And similarly, he writes: "[w]hat justifies us in designating disciplines as human sciences is first and foremost their endeavor to relate human life, and the objective spirit realized by it, back to a creative, evaluative, and active source, something that expresses and objectifies itself" (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 109). The question that arises is: do these statements not adumbrate a metaphysical source?

From Transcendent Religion to Immanent Lived Experience

So far, I have argued that Dilthey's shift from descriptive psychology to hermeneutics constitutes not only an epistemological issue but also an ontological one. At this point, I would like to emphasize the thoroughly immanent nature of Dilthey's philosophy of life. If life itself is the foundation of knowledge, it is because, for Dilthey, the great theory of immanence, of enthusiasm for the universe, the this-worldliness that seems to constitute our secure world, and the re-channeling of knowledge into the nexus of reality itself, poses an entirely new task for reflective consciousness (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 489). In the *Einleitung* and in *Drafts for Volume 2 of the Einleitung*, Dilthey's immanence is obvious, because he keeps returning to life as the foundation and the limit of knowledge. When Dilthey reduces religion to an expression of psychic reality in the *Einleitung,* we are clear about the centrality of immanence in his work. But to what extent does Dilthey remain bound to a thoroughly immanent conception of life and knowledge when he returns to hermeneutics in the *Aufbau,* where he considers emergent cultural phenomena as also being objectifications of spirit?

Very helpful in this regard is a fragment on religion and lived experience from Dilthey's late writings, to be found in *Plans for a Continuation of the Aufbau*. In this discussion, Dilthey argues that religious experience is especially central to the objectification and organization of the human spirit, for the peculiar trait of religious experience is that life as experienced enters into relation with the invisible. This relation stems from the way religious individuals experience life. He writes that, "[l]ife experienced according to its true nature… points to something strange and unfamiliar, as if it were

coming from invisible sources, something passing in on life from outside, yet coming from its own depths" (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 285). We sense here that Dilthey is almost willing to concede or compromise on his theory of immanence. And yet Dilthey goes on to argue that, although something emerges in lived experience that extends beyond the experience of life itself, "the moment that lead beyond life is always embedded in life itself" (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 284). Like Weber, Dilthey acknowledges the other-worldly experiences of religious people but ultimately considers these experiences to be rooted deeply within the this-worldly *human* essence, which religious people experience more fully (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 285). It is the experiencing and the living more deeply in their own essence that leads religious people to liberate themselves from worldly drives and social entanglements and to transport themselves toward the invisible. Hence, natural law, natural religion and theology would be rejected, because historicism rejects laws and norms of transcendent origin and eternal validity and affirms laws in the immanent sense (Plantinga 1980: 127).

Dilthey's rejection of metaphysics and transcendence applies not only to religiously based philosophies of history, as are to be found in the work of Ranke and Carlyle, but also to secular philosophies of history, such as in the work of Hegel, Droysen, and de Tocqueville, each of whom posited teleological development in history that transcended human reality in some way (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 137). Dilthey criticizes each of these thinkers for simplifying history by attempting to grasp its philosophy in a single formula, for neither history nor nature has an ultimate and simple message (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 141), and he argues that their respective failure to place the problem of history in relation to the epistemological task leads each one of them to impose a transcendent teleology onto the immanent development of this world. For Dilthey, each attempt at grasping the philosophy of history in a single transcendent formula is only a reflection of our own inner life, and even the power of the concept of progress derives less from the idea of an end than from our own experience of a striving will.

Crucially, however, rejecting metaphysical philosophies of history does not lead Dilthey to regard history as meaningless and purposeless, for he argues that, although teleology was banished from the natural sciences when nature was abstracted from the life-nexus in which it was given to us, teleology continues to persist in the full context of life, for the idea of the purposiveness of the human race is indestructible, if purposiveness is understood in its immanent sense

(Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 205). Teleology per se is neither refuted nor rejected by historical criticism, for historical criticism merely points to the boundless ambiguity of historical material. As with his critique of Comte's declaration of the decline of metaphysics and the emergence of the positive stage of history, Dilthey again claims that it is not direct rational argument in the form of causal research but indirect subjective feelings that lead to the decline of dogmas, such as faith in a transcendent teleology (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 208). It was only when people began to *feel* that the metaphysical, teleological interpretations had a different cognitive value from real, causal explanations that transcendent teleological principles failed to hold power over their consciousness (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 207). The transcendent conception of history lost its relevance and was replaced by the idea of development and progress—that is, motives of historical movement were sought in humanity itself (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 212).

In his late writings, such as the *Plans for a Continuation of the Aufbau,* Dilthey is even more emphatic about meaning, purpose and teleology in history despite the death of metaphysics: the historical world of the human spirit produces, and is itself suffused with, values and purposes. Dilthey calls this the immanent teleological character of the productive nexus of human spirit. Individuals constitute life and history with their purposes and meaning. But purposes can become detached from the inner-life of individuals and take on a life of their own, for the carriers of this constant creation of values and goods are not only individuals but also emergent cultural phenomena such as communities, cultural systems, epochs, in humanity itself (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 275–76).

Yet, again, we can almost feel that Dilthey wants to loosen his embrace of immanence. If purposes can become detached from the inner-life of individuals and take on a life of their own in the development of humanity, how much of a stretch is it to infer that some metaphysical principle might be at play? Dilthey turns back from the precipice of a transcendent metaphysics only to return to an even tighter embrace of immanence by positing the historicity of the human being: there can be no objective value of life that surpasses what can be experienced, for we need to conceive of the world on the basis of life, not vice versa, lest we relapse into metaphysics. For Dilthey, although there is no metaphysical structure to, nor regularity in, history that can be objectively discerned in the human sciences, there *is* a connectedness of life and history. They do have a sense, a meaning, which is sought by every kind of human being, but this sense and

meaning arises first in *historical, not isolated, human beings*. For Dilthey, *human beings can have historical understanding, because we are ourselves historical beings*. And life is there only in lived experience, understanding and historical comprehension *(*Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 311).

Relativism and the Problem of Nihilism

Rather than give in to a nihilistic observance of the passage of time, Dilthey argues that we may speak of development in history if we delimit development to mean that something is taking shape as a general property of life, not as a metaphysical principle (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 252). Dilthey's emphasis on immanent teleology, on something taking shape in historical development, is far removed from the nihilistic denial of meaning that finds much stronger expression in Weber's work, and that characterizes later historicism and relativism.

Until 1880, historicism in the work of the Historical School was wedded to a fundamentally metaphysical faith in the meaning and purpose of historical development as something individual, unique and unrepeatable; classical historicism was not relativist but committed to the ethical unfolding of God's plan in history (Bambach 1995; Plantinga 1980). But the historical outlook secularized over time, and the idea of development gained prominence, especially with respect to autonomous development. Divine providence gave way to autonomous development, evolution. But since Dilthey is not a theist, he holds that the purpose in history is not one set by God. For Dilthey, development means that the present is filled with the past and has the future within it. Hence, development for Dilthey applies in a weak not strong sense (Plantinga 1980: 127).

Of course, this raises the question of how we are to understand that which is taking shape. Dilthey responds that the meaning of history needs to be understood from within itself, and this can only be accomplished once it is understood that the values and purposes of this historical whole are centered in ages and epochs. Epochs are centered on themselves and need to be understood from within (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 177). The spirit of an age is centered on itself; understanding the immanent teleology of an age requires that we examine human societies not through transcendent, universal, eternal, objective criteria but through the values and judgments, the spirit of an epoch (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 207). What characterizes generations, ages and epochs is that they are general, dominant permeating

tendencies. There is the concentration of a whole culture within itself so that the values, purposes and life-rules of the time can provide the norm for judging, evaluating and assessing. *An individual, a tendency, and a community derive their meaning within this whole through their inner relation to the spirit of the age*: "History itself is the productive force in generating value-determinations, ideals and purposes by which the meaning of human being and events is appraised" (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 309). This means that all ages are centered upon themselves and should not be seen as stepping stones in a particular sequence, nor as precursors of subsequent developments (Rickman 1988).

If we cannot judge an epoch aside from its own standards, does historicism necessarily lead to relativism and, in its extreme versions, to nihilism? Dilthey's work seems to give in to an extreme form of relativism, especially in the *Aufbau* and subsequent writings on hermeneutics, when he was most lucid about historicism and the recognition of the sense of finitude of the human social world, even of the highest creations of communal life (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 173). Every historical configuration recognizes its own finitude, because each age refers to the previous age and contains the striving for a future one. The sense of finitude leads Dilthey to suggest that all concepts are historically relative, as, for instance, when he argues that the question of how to delimit the reality of objectified spirit in a subject like a nation is one that "can be explained only to the extent that the concepts themselves and their delimitations are historically relative" (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 302). If one eliminates the foundation provided by transcendental philosophy, then there is no method to establish unconditional norms, values, or purposes. Any such claim to universality is saddled with relativity, due to its origin (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 308). Of course, Dilthey makes his boldest claim when he writes that:

> [t]he historical consciousness of the finitude of every historical phenomenon and of every human or social state, and of the relativity of every kind of faith is the final step toward the liberation of human beings. (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 310)

With historical consciousness, human beings can enjoy every experience to the full, unencumbered, as if no system of philosophy or faith could bind them. The only thing that is not relative is the continuity of creative force, which is the core historical fact (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 310).

Were we to take these statements on relativity and finitude in isolation and at face value, they would confirm Dilthey's reputation as an extreme historicist and relativist. In spite of the fact that Dilthey made these comments very late in his life in the *Plans for a Continuation of the Aufbau*, we should not take them as Dilthey's final, definitive statement, because he routinely made such bold and extreme statements in favor of subjectivism and relativism, only to qualify them, or even to contradict them, later by some other statement in favor of the need for objectivity in the human sciences. Thus, with respect to the finitude of all historical phenomena and the relativity of every kind of faith, Dilthey has also said that it is precisely the recognition of finitude, combined with the desire to transcend it, that constitutes the tragic predicament of human beings (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 64; *cf.* De Mul 2004). For example, in the *Plans for a Continuation of the Aufbau*, he also writes that history itself leads to consciousness of relativity in history; every historical phenomenon is relative because it is finite, but the relation of the finite to the absolute already contains the relation (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 309). Hence, it is the tension between the relative and the absolute that is Dilthey's locus, not one extreme or the other.

Despite Dilthey's increasingly relativistic stance, late in his life, as evidenced in his writings on worldviews and on finitude, this stance needs to be kept in view of his life-long goal of providing an epistemological foundation to the human sciences that could provide the objective knowledge needed to offset the historicist emphasis on the unique and the incomparable. Dilthey denied that he was a historicist or committed to historical relativism or that he was a skeptic. He remained firm in his orientation toward a universally valid foundation for the human sciences and toward the objectivity of historical knowledge (Bambach 1995: 173). Dilthey's emphasis on structures, systems, coherences, the effort to construe typologies, general forms of comparison, and a certain amount of detachment for understanding all belie historicism, which Dilthey himself acknowledged when he wrote to Husserl that, "I am not a philosopher of intuition, nor a historicist, nor a skeptic" (cited in Plantinga 1980: 135; see also Ermath 1981: 332). If he followed the lead of the Historical School and their celebration of the unique and the singular, he also wrote that "[t]he knife of historical relativism, which at the same time has wounded all metaphysics and religion, must also bring with it a healing touch"[4] (cited in Bambach 1995: 181). Indeed, Dilthey's historicism is of a relatively moderate kind,

one that does not give up an ethical reformatory impulse (Ermath 1981).

The Persistence of Metaphysics

While Dilthey succeeded in bringing to self-awareness the metaphysical contradictions of classical historicism and the problems of a scientific rationality that posited a belief in a rigorously methodological access to truth, he ultimately succumbed to a more deep-rooted metaphysical thinking in his own work (Bambach 1995). The specificity of Dilthey's project, for instance, emphasized historicity as a fundamental category of human life on which to define his epistemological foundation for the human sciences (Bambach 1995: 176, fn. 143), though he remained committed to the non-historical ideals of interpretation and apodictic certitude and universal validity.[5] Whereas the Historical School had stressed the historicity of the object, Dilthey stressed also the historicity of the subject, the effects of which go beyond epistemological questions about historical relativism to ontological questions about the human being itself (Bambach 1995: 180). And yet no objective methodology could adequately explain what it means to "be" historical or to understand ourselves as historical beings.

Quite apart from the persistence of the metaphysical mood, the rejection of metaphysics is not entirely complete in Dilthey. Rand (1964) argues that historicism itself is a form of metaphysical thinking, a worldview, but one that is neither a science nor a religion nor a systematically formulated philosophy. As we have seen, classical historicism was clearly founded on metaphysical assumptions; but we have also seen that Dilthey was adamant in his rejection of a divine, or otherwise transcendent, purpose in history. In effect, we do not need to share Rand's argument about historicism as metaphysics to recognize that Dilthey's doctrine of understanding and his theory of objectified spirit do point toward certain metaphysical affirmations, which he did not explicitly embrace (Plantinga 1980).

His doctrine of understanding requires some metaphysical underpinnings, because if understanding is a special kind of knowledge that not only overcomes the alienation of the other from the outset, "the rediscovery of the I in the Thou," but is possible throughout the entire world, then there must be an ontology that could explain how the entire world is familiar and not alien, as I discussed in Chapter 1 with respect to Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutics. Dilthey provides

no such ontology, which is the reason that Heidegger and Gadamer align Dilthey with the Enlightenment Kantian tradition. Yet Dilthey's thinking seems to require the presupposition that nothing in the human world can be truly alien. Only if the assumption is accepted does Dilthey's doctrine of understanding take on its fullest proportions.[6] Moreover, his emphasis on the individual remains provisional, because it is coupled with the belief that the individual is insufficient, must be transcended in the direction of the whole, the universal. This is an indication of the insufficiency of the individual. But the individual never reaches the whole nor becomes the whole by this slow process of growth (Plantinga 1980: 152–53). Hence, Plantinga (1980: 156) asks, "How is the whole to be understood out of the individual? Is there a transhistorical source and pattern of meaning and rationality that represents the real truth about life and history, and if so is it somehow accessible to us?"

Perhaps, in his turn to objectified spirit as the proper domain of the human sciences, Dilthey finally began to give serious consideration to the possibility that life as a totality is infinite and unfathomable, beyond human expression. But it also seems to lead us to the edge of metaphysics, to an immanent-transcendence that Dilthey, like much of the modern human sciences, is not willing to acknowledge openly.

What others regard as a sort of problem with Dilthey—his inability to reach firm conclusions, his openness to considering so many different angles to the same problem, his willingness to mediate irreconcilable extremes—I regard as the genuine dialogical attitude in Dilthey: a refusal to accept dogmatic closure, except on the crucial question of metaphysics. Dilthey certainly flirts with the dangers of nihilism inherent in a radical historicist view, as, for instance, when he suggests that even the persistence of a metaphysical mood is but a passing phase in the history of the world, or, for instance, when he suggests that even the theory of worldviews is itself subject to finitude. But if the cognizance of the sense of finitude is not to lead to nihilism, there must be some remnant of a theory of transcendence. The rejection of metaphysics and the preoccupation with immanence can avoid nihilism only by adopting some form of a metaphysics of immanence, some form of an immanent-transcendence. Thus, while Dilthey appears willing to go quite a long way down the path of historicism and nihilism, he avoids the extremes of nihilism by implicitly conceding to a metaphysics of immanence.

In so far as Dilthey is attempting to develop an objective *critique* of historical reason along Kantian lines, and in so far as Dilthey does

not reject the psychological stage of his work in which he claims that a completely secure point of departure for the human sciences is provided only by the facts of consciousness (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 275), he remains within the Cartesian-Kantian framework of knowledge. But even if we take into account the turn to hermeneutics, it remains the case that, for Dilthey, epistemological self-reflection, as the foundation of knowledge, provides the most fundamental perspective on the status of humanity. Thus, despite Dilthey's lifelong struggle to balance the claims of the objective, Enlightenment mode of reasoning with the subjectivist, Romanticist inner experience, he never seems to entirely escape the Cartesian-Kantian framework, as has been noted by Heidegger and Gadamer, who critique Dilthey by elaborating the ontological presuppositions that he refused. In a sense, their critique is similar to, but also different from, the critique that Muslim critics raise: that epistemological self-purgation alone, without ontological recognition of the nature of human beings as at least partly dependent on God for knowledge about themselves, cannot solve the problems of knowledge.

From the point of view of the Muslim critics of modern knowledge, the metaphysics of immanence is not a strong enough brake to prevent the sliding into nihilism that comes with the rejection of a transcendent teleology. The problem that is raised by Dilthey's conception of the immanent teleology is that he insists on understanding the whole from within itself, since he maintains that values, purposes, rules are centered in ages, epochs, etcetera (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 177). But that an epoch is centered on itself is difficult to maintain from within the whole. How can you understand the whole from within itself? How can you know that an epoch is centered within itself? Muslim critics of modern knowledge may applaud the hermeneutic holism that is ubiquitous in Dilthey's work, even in his psychological stage where he does not refer explicitly to the whole-part relation. And yet his Muslim critics cannot but wonder why or how his conception of the whole can be so dogmatically closed to metaphysics, religious or secular. Why is the whole so rigidly and narrowly restricted as to exclude all metaphysics, except as expressions of psychological need?

Dilthey appears to understand the problems of immanence; he alludes fleetingly to the problems of immanence and finitude when he writes that the mode of delimitation from within produces suffering and the striving to overcome it. This is the tragedy of finitude and the incentive to transcend it (Dilthey 2002 [1910]: 264). But how is an immanent transcendence possible given Dilthey's avowal that

all living things, including communal, emergent cultural entities, are finite? How then to seek a lasting transcendence? Dilthey also acknowledges that a full grasp of the whole only occurs at the end, and yet history is a whole that is never possible to complete. So how is the individual psycho-physical life-unit or even, for that matter, the broadest of emergent cultural phenomena, humanity, to derive meaning if it has not seen the whole? How then to derive a meaning that is meaningful and honest to the principles of immanence and finitude?

Dilthey could be defended against this charge by arguing that, although historicism puts into question metaphysical philosophies of history and thus erodes the meaning that is derived from such a philosophy, historicism is not corrosive of meaning per se, for while the historian must search for meaning, he need not search for one grand meaning (Rickman 1988). Indeed, this is precisely my argument with respect to Weber's concern with the uniqueness of the West. As I demonstrate in the next chapter, and discuss more fully in the Conclusion, while Weber rejects the possibility that the disenchanted human sciences could contribute to understanding the grand meaning of the world, he remains committed to understanding problems of intermediate meaning.

But a Muslim critic would respond that, once the connection with Transcendence is severed, immanence must lead slowly but ineluctably to nihilism. The metaphysics of immanence is an ersatz substitute. Many Muslim critics can only agree with Gianni Vattimo that the collapse of all transcendent and suprahistorical values brings a nihilistic, posthistorical form of thinking, although those critics would not celebrate this new form of thought.

Nevertheless, in one sense, Dilthey's incomplete reconfiguration of the ontology of the human social world is an important point for the intercultural dialogue on the human sciences, because it suggests that there are idealist openings within the modern Western conception of the human sciences that deal with non-material reality, without necessarily reducing reality to psychic reality. This has immense potential for a dialogue between Islamic and modern conceptions of the human sciences, albeit a dialogue that is punctuated by poignant moments of silence on the problem of immanence versus transcendence, as an analysis of Weber's work will demonstrate.

5

Weber: From Nihilism to an Organic Metaphysics

The *Sozialwissenschaften*

Although Weber had planned to write a major systematic work on Islam, as he had on the religions of China, India, and ancient Israel, he never got to it (Tenbruck 1980: 327). What we have instead are inchoate and disparate remarks on Islam sprinkled throughout his opus. Although this piecemeal treatment itself presents an obstacle, some attempts have been made to read Weber's sociology of Islam far more systematically (e.g., Schluchter 1999). A more serious problem in Weber's sociology of Islam is the second-hand nature of his knowledge of the subject. Weber seems to have relied heavily on the research of the Orientalist Carl Becker,[1] and, no doubt, the second-hand nature of his knowledge accounts for some factually incorrect and, in some cases, even outlandish remarks on Islam.[2] Moreover, Weber (1978 [1914]: 623–27) repeatedly draws upon the tropes of sensualism and tribalism, which were part and parcel of the Orientalism of his day, and further reinforces them by commenting on the warrior ethic of Islam (Turner 1974). On Weber's view, to be a warrior is, in the case of Hinduism, a vocational ethic, but when it comes to Islam (Weber 1978 [1914]: 1191) not even the rudiments of a vocational ethic can be found. These and other problems of Weber's sociology of Islam have received some deservedly critical treatment (see, e.g., Rodinson 1974 [1966]; Turner 1978, 1974; Salvatore 1997; Isin 2002).[3]

That Weber never actually got around to writing a systematic work on Islam suggests that Islam held less comparative value for him than

other religions. It may be not too much of a stretch to speculate that this was so because Islamic history has not been as removed from European history as Hindu or Buddhist history, which would yield greater comparative insights.

It is clear that Weber's comparative analyses were central to proving his thesis of Western exceptionalism, and this appears to have been particularly true of his inchoate analysis of Islam. For example, Weber (1978 [1914]: 1160–61) writes: "The clash of the two powers in medieval Europe and in Islam resulted in the greatest differences between the cultural development of the Orient and the Occident." Although Weber is ambivalent about Western exceptionalism, and notwithstanding his view of the emergence of the Occidental city out of the medieval and feudal age, it is largely by disparaging metaphysics, scholasticism, and medieval logic (Weber 1977 [1907]: 78)—precisely that phase of history when Islam developed and Islamic civilization reached its heyday—that Weber puts forth his thesis of the uniqueness of the modern Occident.

Given Weber's narrow interest in and problematic treatment of Islam, I am far more interested in engaging with Weber as the profound methodologist of the social sciences and sociologist of modernity. If Dilthey is a preeminent philosopher of the human sciences, Weber is undoubtedly a founder, an authority and the greatest practitioner, as both his critics and supporters acknowledge (see, e.g., Voegelin 1952; Strauss 1953; and the collection of essays in Mommsen and Osterhammel 1987).

Weber's first-hand, but ambivalent, insights into the nature of the modern Occident lead us back to the questions of meaning, metaphysics, and a retrieval of transcendence. My interest in Weber in this chapter is, thus, twofold: I am interested, first, in demonstrating how the shift from Dilthey, the philosopher of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, to Weber, the practitioner and methodologist of the purely concrete and empirical *Sozialwissenschaften,* leads to the loss of the metaphysical mood and to the precipice of nihilism. That is, how a shift from an hermeneutic framework founded on interpretive understanding to an economic-cultural perspective, which seeks to mediate causal explanation and interpretive understanding, undermines the metaphysical basis of the human sciences.

Second, I am interested in demonstrating how the process of rationalization (*Entzauberungprozess*), which is intertwined, on the one hand, with Weber's postulation of the uniqueness of the Occident and, on the other hand, with his resolute gaze into the heart of nihilism,

is never as complete as it might appear. I argue that Weber is able to salvage his opus from falling into the abyss of nihilism only by bringing back an immanent metaphysics into his work. Yet, although this retrieval of an immanent metaphysics has similarities with Dilthey's recovery of an immanent-transcendence, Weber's conception of an "organic metaphysics" remains thoroughly grounded in empirical reality and thus offers fewer prospects and hopes for going beyond human finitude.

Symbolic Culture and Empirical Reality

Although Dilthey and Weber both regard the human sciences as interpretive endeavors rather than as positivistic sciences of human society, as elaborated by Comte or Mill, there is much that differentiates their respective conceptions of interpretive understanding. In the methodological essays alone, it is clear from Weber's passing remarks that he was familiar with Dilthey's *Einleitung der Geisteswissenschaften*, in which Dilthey elaborates a relatively minimal ontological difference between nature and *Geist*, and in which Dilthey puts forth developmental psychology as the foundational discipline of the human sciences. In fact, Weber's attacks on "immediate experience," "pure experience," and "self-evidence" (see, e.g., the methodological essays on the work of Wilhelm Roscher and Karl Knies) are all part of his attack on the newly developing phenomenological movement of Edmund Husserl and the descriptive, developmental psychology of Dilthey (Huff 1984). For Weber, the very notion of *Geist*, as Dilthey uses it, is an unfounded speculation that has no place in a concrete science.

Weber is particularly critical of Dilthey's adoption of the notion of *VolksGeist*, which was central to the work of the German Historical School of Jurisprudence. The Historical School had responded to the Enlightenment's abstract rationalism of universal laws by arguing that laws cannot be deduced from maxims. Instead, the Historical School cited empirical evidence to point out that laws develop and have meaning only in keeping with the spirit of particular communities. Hence, for the Historical School, law is fundamentally irrational. What troubles Weber is that the Historical School reifies the concept of *Geist* and treats it as a metaphysical, intuitable totality, rather than employing the concept as a heuristic notion, devoid of metaphysical implications, and removed from the realm of intuition to the field of empirical observation.

The contradiction here is that Weber attacks non-empirical concepts rooted in intuition but he also recognizes that the social sciences deal with non-empirical symbolic reality. Although symbolic culture is central to Weber's (1949c [1917]) own elaboration of social and cultural sciences of concrete, empirical reality [*Wirtlichkeitswissenschaft*], symbolic culture appears always to point to a transcendent realm beyond empirical observation. Why, then, does Weber so stridently attack metaphysics as incompatible with science? This contradiction is compounded by Weber's further assertion that, because the empirical social sciences mediate causal and interpretive understanding, they must be capable of enabling an empathic interpretation of mystical experiences, even though such mystical experiences cannot be adequately communicated in words and are not fully *understandable* for a person with no mystical proclivities. For Weber (1978 [1914]: 5), whereas interpretation strives only for clarity and verifiable accuracy of insight and comprehension, which is attained when we can adequately grasp the emotional context in which the action took place through *sympathetic* participation, to fully understand requires reliving or recapturing the experience. He acknowledges, however, that many ultimate values, especially those which are the most different from our own, cannot be fully interpreted empathically, even though we may grasp them intellectually. Weber insists that, in such cases, we must be content simply with an intellectual understanding, or, when that also fails, we must accept such values as given facts. In such cases, it would be permissible to strive to understand, on the basis of whatever allows for approximate emotional and intellectual interpretation, only the action that is motivated by those incomprehensible values.

Weber's substantive sociology of religion is characterized, above all, by the reduction of all religious or mystical phenomena to their empirical and, even more narrowly, to their socio-economic manifestations. Hence, notwithstanding his methodological aspirations to interpret otherworldly phenomena, Weber is resolute in reducing metaphysical concerns to this-worldly empirical problems. For Weber, the sociologist of religion, the religious expression of a transcendent existence is, in fact, rooted in this-worldly concerns of averting external evils and of inducing the advantages of this world. Accordingly, for Weber, the illusion of the other-worldliness of religious phenomena is, in fact, part of an evolutionary process characterized by two distinctive aspects. One aspect is the rationalization of the god concept and the possible relationships of man to the divine, such that magical

prescriptions and coercive acts over demons give way to a religious ethic and the consequences of sin. The second corresponding aspect is that the original, calculating, rational, religiously motivated behavior recedes until "the significance of distinctively religious behavior is sought less and less in the purely external advantages of everyday economic success. Thus, the goal of religious behavior is successively 'irrationalized' until finally otherworldly non-economic goals come to represent what is distinctive in religious behavior" (Weber 1978 [1914]: 424).[4]

Just as Weber is critical of Dilthey's use of the notion of *Geist* in any non-heuristic manner, so he criticizes a reliance upon transcendent, metaphysical notions of teleology beyond their use as heuristic supports for causal analysis. For instance, reminiscent of Dilthey and of Simmel (1977 [1905]), Weber concedes that metaphysical, teleological interpretations were useful, as heuristic devices, in order to establish general insights into relationships of organic phenomena, in biology (and in all modern sciences) in the initial stages of development. However, for Weber (1977 [1907]: 83), although these early teleological interpretations may be acceptable for heuristic purposes in order to derive empirical propositions, they constitute an anthropomorphic metaphysics.

The difference between Dilthey, Simmel, and Weber is that, whereas the former two display a surprising openness to metaphysical thought and to the possibility of a supra-human teleology, Weber drastically reduces both. For example, although Dilthey does, in the end, deny a transcendent teleology, he substitutes an immanent teleology in the form of a holistic conception of *Geist*. Similarly, Simmel (1977 [1905]: 118) does argue that metaphysics ascribes causation to a single basic uniform principle rather than to real, underlying causes. Metaphysics, therefore, impedes and complicates the search for a more exact form of knowledge about the real properties of things. Nevertheless, writes Simmel (1977 [1905]: 119), "metaphysics represents an initial attempt to make sense of phenomena. It represents the first intellectual conquest of the empirical world. To regard metaphysics as worthless simply because it is a beginning and not an end is only a species of empiricist arrogance." In sharp contrast, Weber (1975b [1903–1905]: 180) refutes intuition as a valid means of producing knowledge and argues that intuitive interpretation of meaningful action represses causal analysis "in favor of the search for a 'total character,' which corresponds to the 'feeling of totality' . The need for a formula which reproduces the 'synthesis of feeling' replaces the need for a formula

which expresses the results of empirical analysis." In refuting intuition because it is unable to provide a causal explanation of things, Weber dismisses not only Dilthey's holistic hermeneutics as an inadequate source for valid knowledge but all forms of non-empirically verifiable knowledge, in favor of a methodological individualism that proffers narrower causal, analytical "understanding." So concerned is Weber with producing only an empirical science of concrete reality that he cannot tolerate the possibility that the *Sozialwissenschaften* could be tinged with any form of metaphysics, transcendent or immanent, religious or secular. Weber acknowledges that teleological thought takes diverse forms, but for the social sciences (1975b [1903–1905]: 145–47) he is willing to consider only those which are in keeping with empirically verifiable knowledge—that is, teleology conceived as means-ends thinking or as this-worldly motives or purposes of individuals, while he regards the other forms as falling into the realm of speculation, which is ultimately of little worth to him.[5]

As the political philosopher, and strident critic of Weber, Leo Strauss (1953: 7–8) notes, is it adequate for Weber first to negate the teleological view of the universe and then to give an account of human ends by conceiving them as merely motives, desires and impulses?

Objectivity and Meaning in the *Sozialwissenschaften*

Having dismissed Dilthey's initial formulations, Weber seems subsequently to ignore the former's turn to hermeneutics, since there are few references to his later works, particularly the *Aufbau,* in which Dilthey postulated an even more radical disjunction between nature and *Geist*.[6] Instead, Weber (1975b [1903–1905]: 185) takes up the neo-Kantian position that there is no radical ontological difference between nature and culture, between "outer phenomena" and "inner experience," because both are amenable to analysis in terms of abstract concepts and laws, since conceptual thinking is the same in both fields. In line with Rickert's neo-Kantian view, for Weber (1975b [1903–1905]: 230, fn. 82), the only difference between knowledge of nature and knowledge of culture is the purely logical distinction in their respective methods of concept formation.

Since Weber agrees with the neo-Kantians[7] that there is no radical distinction between the *Naturwissenschaften* and the *Sozialwissenschaften*, this means that for Weber the notions of causality and objectivity are just as applicable in the latter as in the

former. However, this presupposition gives rise to a formidable dance in Weber's work. On the one hand, he recognizes that explanations of causality in the *Naturwissenschaften*[8] are given in abstract laws that make these sciences more and more remote from empirical reality, though this is problematic for the *Sozialwissenschaften* since their aim is to make meaningful social action even more concretely understandable. On the other hand, Weber also recognizes that the desire to keep the *Sozialwissenschaften* relevant to empirical reality raises an immense challenge to the quest for objectivity. He (1949b [1904]: 76) struggles to uphold the objectivity of the *Sozialwissenschaften* when he argues that, since the *Sozialwissenschaften* analyze social phenomena in terms of their cultural significance, the logical peculiarity of historical knowledge is that it has meaning for us. He writes that (1949b [1904]: 76, emphasis added) "[e]mpirical reality becomes culture *to us* in so far as *we* relate it to value-ideas." Thus, it appears that Weber's (1949c [1917]: 21) notion of objectivity in the *Sozialwissenschaften* resides in the distinction between the value-relevance (i.e., the values and interests that direct a researcher's attention toward a particular topic) of an object and the results or findings of the research: while the problems of social science are selected by the value-relevance of the object, the problems themselves are to be solved non-evaluatively "for scientific truth is precisely what is valid for all who seek the truth" (1949b [1904]: 84).

One of the central paradoxes of Weber's methodological work is that the more he elaborates the logical difference of the *Sozialwissenschaften*, the further he moves from the goal of objectivity. The problem for sciences of empirical, concrete reality (*Wirtlichkeitswissenschaften*), such as sociology and economics, is that, since culture is their object of analysis, they must deal with normative issues, such as value-judgments, while themselves remaining ethically neutral sciences (Weber 1949c [1917]). The problem is further compounded, because, since the problems in the social sciences are guided by practical interests, that is, by their value-relevance, the results of an "objective" study are interpreted in view of practical interests. When Weber (1949b [1904]: 81) writes that "all knowledge of cultural reality is always knowledge from particular points of view," is he referring solely to the selection of a topic, or to something more? Similarly what are we to make of his (1949c [1917]: 27) comments more than a decade later that empirical investigation alone does not provide the necessary factual basis for an evaluation of a social order, and that if one wishes to evaluate

a social order, it must be examined through the operation of various objective and subjective selective factors? And, furthermore, that evaluation weakens causal analysis, because the historian runs the risk of "explaining" another social order by describing in terms of a "mistake" or a "decline" what is perhaps the consequence of ideals different from his own; hence, the historian who evaluates fails in his most important task, that is, the task of understanding (Weber 1949c [1917]: 33).

If, for the time being, we focus solely on Weber's methodological claims,[9] without glancing at his substantive work, and if we accept that, for Weber, subjectivity goes only so far as to imply the value-relevance of a topic and nothing more, then we would have to concur with Strauss that, from Weber's point of view, social scientists can only describe things without drawing any conclusions. Now, Strauss (1953: 49–50) points out that it is the duty of a social scientist to present social phenomena truthfully and faithfully, which means presenting the facts as he sees them. Strauss asks: how can one give a causal analysis of anything if one does not see it for what it really is? If a social scientist recognizes "specialists without spirit," to use Weber's term, must he not describe them as such? And if a person cannot see spiritual emptiness, is he not disqualified from being a social scientist?

Evidently, Weber struggles valiantly to rescue his formulation of the *Sozialwissenschaften* from falling into a relativistic world view or philosophy. It may be worth speculating that so wary was Weber of the emergence of *Lebensphilosophie*, of a philosophy of life of the type that Dilthey appeared to be advocating, that he could not tolerate the association of his "objective" conception of the social sciences with subjective evaluations. Even as his substantive writings lead him to the practical problem of evaluating other social orders, methodologically he continues to uphold the logical disjunction between personal evaluation and empirical scientific assertions. Weber never completely escapes the tension between objectivity and subjectivity, because he refuses to accept even a relative ontological difference between the world of nature and the world of culture. As late as 1917, Weber (1949c [1917]: 8–9) maintained that the disjunction between practical evaluation and causal interpretation "must be unconditionally postulated by logic." The problem is that, despite the *logical* disjunction between empirical assertions and practical evaluations, Weber (1949c [1917]: 18) himself knows that the boundary is, most of the time, blurred for people in their everyday lives.

He fails to mention, of course, that the boundary is blurred even in his own substantive work. The weight of the evidence from Weber's substantive research leaves no doubt that description and evaluation are both core elements in his *Sozialwissenschaft*. Although Weber may have regarded himself as giving an objective account of the uniqueness of the West in terms of the *Entzauberungprozess*, there is no doubt that his description also entails an ambivalent evaluation, but an evaluation nonetheless. Moreover, in light of Weber's appraisal of the iron cage of modern formal rationality, and of the history of Islam as a "cluster of absences" (Rodinson 1974 [1966]; Turner 1974, 1978) in comparison to modern Western developments, it ought to be evident that Weber did not fail to evaluate some orders as devoid of spirit. Of course, it remains difficult to reconcile his evaluation of the history of Islam with his comments, encountered earlier, about the historian who, as a consequence of ideals different from his own, explains another social order by describing it in terms of a "mistake" or a "decline." Still, Weber's lack of reflexivity in this case cannot be used to deny his awareness of his subjectivistic evaluations of other social orders. There are many references scattered throughout his substantive writings that acknowledge his own particularistic point of view. Time and again, Weber interjects qualifiers into his substantive analyses to indicate his recognition of the subjectivistic, perspectival nature of his statements. The parenthetical "as we like to think" (1958 [1904]: 13) in the "Introduction" that Weber wrote in 1920 for the reprinting of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* as part of the series on the sociology of religion, and repeated earlier in similar words (e.g., "as we would put it, from our normative point of view" (1975c [1903–1905]: 114) throughout his earlier methodological and substantive writings, goes far beyond the limited idea of selecting topics because of their value-relevance. Such statements indicate an implicit, if begrudging, acceptance of the lack of universal objectivity in the *Sozialwissenschaften*. Indeed, it seems more likely that for Weber what really demarcates the *Sozialwissenschaften* from the *Naturwissenschaften* is not simply the value-relevance of a topic for the former but also that their interpretation of findings itself has meaning only from particular points of view, as Charles Taylor suggests when he states that the modern human sciences are merely the self-clarification of the Western experience of modernity.

In making these concessions to subjectivity and particularism, was Weber merely being influenced by the fashionable worldview philosophies of his day and age? Or was he seriously entertaining

doubts about the universalism of his thought? Given his personal aversion to philosophical fads, and given that these types of statements are scattered throughout his early methodological and later substantive writings, it suggests a more lasting doubt about the universalism of his own thought. Indeed, as Weber turns to his substantive writings, he drops the neo-Kantian terminology of *Kulturwissenschaften* in favor of the term *Sozialwissenschaften*,[10] a subtle shift that does not lead to an altogether different object of study but perhaps signals Weber's increasing willingness to let go of the objectivist ideal of neo-Kantianism and to admit the perspectival nature of knowledge.[11]

My intention here is not to be critical of the incursion of evaluations in Weber's substantive analyses. What I am critical of is Weber's methodological insistence on postulating the difference between interpretation and evaluation, because empirical assertions are meaningless without their practical evaluations. Like Dilthey, only more so, Weber cannot let go of the search for objectivity. No matter how much subjectivity is self-evident, he keeps returning, in his substantive work, to the claim of objectivity. The problem is not that his substantive analyses are so subjective; rather, the problem is the hankering after objectivity, extreme in Weber's case, since he regards the knowledge of culture and of nature as ontologically identical. However, this identification of culture and nature is in itself contradictory (Strauss 1953: 8), since Weber regards nature as having no teleology, and yet he regards ends and motives as causal forces for human behavior. What we have, then, is a bifurcation of a teleological science of man, on the one hand, and a non-teleological science of nature, on the other hand.

The *Entzauberungprozess* and the Threat of Nihilism

It is time now to take full leave of Weber's methodological writings and to turn directly to his substantive concern with the *Entzauberungprozess,* that is with the process of rationalization and disenchantment, which Friedrich Tenbruck (1980) describes, for better or for worse, as the key to unlocking the secret to the thematic unity of Weber's wide-ranging opus.

As I indicated in the previous chapter, even though Dilthey dismisses religious and secular transcendent metaphysical reason to a

bygone era, he recognizes the persistence of a metaphysical mood that underpins humanity's search for meaning in the cosmos. I further argued that Dilthey's *Geisteswissenschaften*, rooted in hermeneutic holism, itself embodies an immanent metaphysics.

As for Weber, just as he performs a complicated dance around the problems of causality and objectivity in the *Sozialwissenschaften,* so too he performs a complex ballet with the question of metaphysics. Again, we may begin to analyze his paradoxical dance by turning to his sociology of religion, in particular his analysis of prophecy. Weber argues that, on a prophetic point of view, social and cosmic events all have systematic and coherent meaning, to which the life of man must be oriented in order to bring salvation (1978 [1914]: 450). For Weber, such a consciously integrated, meaningful attitude presupposes a metaphysical scheme that welds the diversity of empirical reality into an ordered totality. However, for Weber, such a totalizing conception not only belies the truth of empirical diversity, but it also smacks of practical evaluations rather than logical consistency. This contradiction between empirical diversity and totalizing religious conceptions produces "the strongest tensions in man's inner life as well as in his external relationship to the world" (Weber 1978 [1914]: 451). Furthermore, according to Weber, this contradiction is replicated in the difference between empirical science and theology, for, although theology attempts to act as a bridge between empirical science and the sacred, it presupposes that the world must have a coherent meaning that it can interpret. Hence, for Weber, genuine religious faith, even in its most rationalized form, such as in Protestant theology, directly or indirectly brings about the "sacrifice of the intellect" and a flight from knowledge relative to the apprehension of the empirical world. He writes:

> The salvation sought by the intellectual is always based on inner need, and hence it is once more remote from life, more theoretical and more systematic than salvation from external distress, the quest for which is characteristic of non-privileged strata. The intellectual seeks in various ways, the casuistry of which extends into infinity, to endow his life with pervasive meaning, and thus to find unity with himself, with his fellow men, and with the cosmos. It is the intellectual who conceives of the "world" as a problem of meaning. As intellectualism suppresses belief in magic, the world's processes become disenchanted, lose their magical significance, and henceforth simply "are" and "happen" but no longer signify anything. As a consequence, there is a growing demand that the world and the total pattern of life be subject to an

> order that is significant and meaningful. The conflict of this requirement of meaningfulness with the empirical realities of the world and its institutions, and with the possibilities of conducting one's life in the empirical world, are responsible for the intellectual's characteristic flight from the world. (1978 [1914]: 506)

In describing this flight from knowledge, Weber distinguishes at least three different kinds: the flight of the religious intellectual, who seeks salvation instead of empirical truth; the flight of the Buddhist, who renounces the possibility that knowledge can lead to the kind of contemplation that provides Nirvana; and the flight of the skeptic, who renounces any possibility of understanding the meaning of the world Weber (1978 [1914]: 567–68).

For Weber, although the world religions themselves represented a stage in the *Entzauberungprozess,* this process now gives rise to empirical science, which does not partake of the contemplation of the meaning of the universe. In light of this development, Weber (1946c [1919]: 147) avers that empirical science, "free from suppositions," expects the religious believer to acknowledge that, if a process can be explained without reference to "miracles" and "revelations," that is, supernatural interventions that have no part in an empirical causal analysis, then the process has to be explained in the way science does, "and the believer can do this without being disloyal to his faith." According to Weber, the genuine modern man, who is willing to face the fatefulness of the times, recognizes that metaphysical questions have no answer, or at least no answer that can be given with certainty in the realm of empirical reality. Consequently, for Weber, the truly genuine modern man cuts off metaphysical problems, places them within the realm of religious belief, and enters willingly into the realm of science, from which he expects no answers to the ultimate questions of life. By insisting on science, Weber extends the ever-increasing reach and range of science, even though it suppresses the ultimate questions.

However, Weber crucially fails to realize, in this context, that the believer can reconcile scientific and theological explanations without being disloyal to the faith only if there is a unifying, integrating framework, which Weber has already rejected. The disenchantment of the modern world, precipitated by the mastery of the world by scientific calculation and technique (Weber 1946c [1919]: 139), calls into question not only totalizing religious views, such as hierarchical conceptions of knowledge connected to the Great Chain of

Being, but also other holistic views, such as Dilthey's hermeneutic *Geisteswissenschaften* (Weber 1978 [1914]: 451).[12] The possibility of reconciliation also exists if one posits two radically different, but not incompatible, frameworks. Indeed, this appears to be what Kant had in mind when he tried to save a space for faith, set apart from critical, rational thought. The difficulty here, of course, is that it requires the believer to adjust his religious mode of thought to a different framework when dealing with science.

The rejection of a metaphysical understanding of the whole of cosmic reality in favor of the social scientific elaboration of a differentiated concrete reality is, again, more than simply a neutral acceptance of the immanent worldview of modernity. It is Weber's personal evaluation of the necessity of differentiation. As Edward Shils (1987: 562) has noted, "[a] large part of the history of modern social science is to be understood as one element in the hope of rationalizing society, both cognitively and practically." Shils adds that for Weber's part, it was a matter not only of description but of a *belief* in the possibility and necessity of the scientific rationalization of society.

The question that Weber, ever the typologist, does not raise in his threefold distinction of flights from knowledge is whether the man who jumps headlong into the vocation of science is himself taking a flight. In differentiating metaphysics from science, might Weber not have done well to acknowledge that many who have jumped headlong into science have done so on the basis of a metaphysical quest? Moreover, is it not possible that his own renunciation of a totally meaningful, religiously ordered cosmos, on the one hand, and a hermeneutic holism, on the other hand, is itself a flight from knowledge, and if not from knowledge, then from wisdom?

Weber's critique of the religious intellectual's flight from the empirical diversity of this world stems from a deeper rejection of transcendent metaphysics. His insistence on the actual and the local, as opposed to the metaphysical, in the name of empirical social science is an extension of the Historical School's reaction against Enlightenment abstract universalism, taken to an extreme. Whereas the Historical School regarded the actual and the local as an emanation from the general, the whole, the *Geist*, for Weber, individual or partial phenomena can only be understood as effects of other individual or partial phenomena, never as effects of wholes (Strauss 1953: 37). Weber's insistence on logical consistency is so resolute that he cannot help take the Historical School's position to its extreme. While historicism is a useful limitation against dogmatic assertions of final or universally

valid views of the whole of human life, in Weber's hands historicism itself becomes extreme and dogmatic when it asserts that there is nothing but the particular, the local and the individual, when it asserts that *everything* is relative to its own age (Strauss 1953).

Hence, Strauss (1953: 23–24) chastises Weber for forgetting that history seems to prove that certain fundamental themes and problems persist, even though clarity about such problems and the suggested solutions differ from age to age. Notwithstanding the historicity of all human beings, history itself seems to indicate that human thought is capable of transcending its historical limitations and of grasping something transhistorical. Even if the attempts to solve the perennial, fundamental philosophical problems are doomed to fail because of historical limitations, human thought is still capable of grasping something transhistorical.

The Tenuous Salvation of an Organic Metaphysics

As we have seen, Weber posits that the *Entzauberungprozess* has led modern man to reject metaphysical speculation in favor of empirical science, which itself cannot provide any meaning to the world. Whereas Weber rejects all totalizing holistic frameworks, some of his commentators (Roth and Schluchter 1979; Schluchter 1981) have regarded his *Entzauberungprozess* as precisely an all-encompassing view of history: a unilinear, evolutionary and teleological process of history. However, this reading exaggerates the extent to which Weber regarded the *Entzauberungprozess* as ineluctable. Yes, Weber regarded rationalization as having differentiated all spheres of life in modernity, but it is also clear that rationalization remains an incomplete and, to some extent, a contingent process. Weber may not have been consistent in the application of his methodological arguments to his substantive work, but he is supremely consistent in rejecting all totalizing frameworks, including the view that rationalization brings everything under its grip, for such a view becomes a teleological framework by which to render the world as an inherently meaningful entity. Instead, according to Weber, the most that can be done is to impute particular meanings to particular contexts. This leaves modern man on the precipice of nihilism.

At this precipice of nihilism, Weber turns to the realm of politics and insists that the genuine modern man must, in the name of an ethic of responsibility, himself take up the task of imputing meaning to the world by deciding between competing ultimate values and subsequent

actions. Given that empirical scientific analysis cannot tell us how to choose between competing values, Weber (1949a [1905]: 122) argues that the act of choosing between values or ideals is not one that is constrained or structured by other causal forces. On the contrary, metaphysical premises help us to decide on action, premises that are *never* demonstrable by science (Weber 1949c [1917]: 24–5. Rather, the ethic of responsibility entails going beyond the empirical limitations of a situation by using one's free will to choose between competing values and consequent actions. Because the ethic of responsibility requires "conscious world-mastery, the subjective correlate of which is self-control vis-à-vis one's own and alien 'gods' ", the ethic of responsibility is an intrinsic part of a metaphysical worldview of immanence (Roth and Schlucter 1979: 52 and 58).

The ethic of responsibility is a part of Weber's own "organic metaphysics"(1949c [1917]: 18), which has an elective affinity with the modern world (Roth and Schluchter 1979: 52); to the extent that Weber followed Nietzsche,[13] it can be said that for Weber, too, "[w]ith the death of God, all values are relativized by a cultural perspectivism which destroys traditional certainties. History is no longer characterized by a grand design" (Turner 1993 [1992]: 213). According to Stauth and Turner (1988), Weber was profoundly influenced by a negative reading of Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God and the relativization of all cultural values. They argue that, whereas Nietzsche rejects fatalism and nihilism by viewing the death of God as a liberating moment, making possible a polytheistic revaluation of values, Weber emerges as a cynical and fatalistic critic of modernity who, paralyzed by the relativity of values that makes genuine moral commitment increasingly untenable across life spheres, ultimately seeks refuge from the threat of nihilism in a rationalistic and individualistic ethic of responsibility. Hence, as an antidote to the collapse of metaphysical and teleological conceptions of the world, Weber rescues the last remnant of meaning in a meaningless world by positing a modest ethic of responsibility around the vocations of science and politics.

Weber's ethic of responsibility thus prevents him from fully embracing the Nietzschean revaluation of immanence, although, for Stauth and Turner, this refusal to go all the way with Nietzsche represents a disingenuous reaction after the recognition of finitude. Stauth and Turner object that, whereas the truly genuine and authentic response is to fully embrace the Nietzschean celebration of the little things that make up modern man's physical and material embodiment in

the world, Weber was unable to cope with the recognition of finitude implicit in his postulation of the inherent meaninglessness of the world after the collapse of all transcendent metaphysical speculation. Unable to cope with finitude, Weber's positing of an organic metaphysics is an act of *ressentiment* (Turner 1993 [1992]), because it serves only to provide an ultimate comfort (Stauth and Turner 1988: 107). Stauth and Turner (ibid: 78) maintain that Nietzsche regards all culture as an illusion that protects us from the awareness of finitude. The tragedy of modern cultural systems is that rational inquiry finally discovers its own horizons and limitations, and the result is cultural pessimism, as Weber's work demonstrates so clearly. Hence, Nietzsche would have rejected Weber's ethic of responsibility, which only prolongs the illusion of ultimate meaning. For their part, Stauth and Turner reject Weber's pessimistic and, in the end, disingenuous vision preferring instead Nietzsche's "joyous, ecstatic" Gay Science, which challenges the modern sciences and humanities and also makes possible a revaluation of values by celebrating man's material and physical embodiment in the world.

I am not entirely persuaded by Stauth and Turner's reading of Weber's reaction to Nietzsche. It seems to me that Weber takes up Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God as a clarion call for the revaluation of the polytheism of values. I concur with them that, for Weber, the ineluctable and irresolvable conflict of values must take place, and each is responsible for constructing the meaning of his own life. But this does not represent a disingenuous reaction, especially if we consider what Weber says about theodicy. Although Weber may not have a musical ear when it comes to religion, one cannot help seeing affinities between his own stance on the polytheism of values and his description of the Buddhist and Hindu resolution of the problem of theodicy by way of the notion of *karma*. For Weber (1978 [1914]: 524–25), the doctrine of *karma* is "the most complete formal solution to the problem of theodicy…This world is viewed as a completely connected and self-contained cosmos of ethical retribution…Each individual forges his own destiny exclusively and in the strictest sense of the word." The immanence in this description of *karma*, the stoical sense of responsibility, the polytheism of values, all find correlates with Weber's own stance on science and politics as vocations. It seems to me that Weber is thoroughly genuine when he, at last, pulls back from the precipice and fully recognizes what lurks beyond.

It is possible to speculate that Weber had the possibility to pull back from the precipice of nihilism much earlier and in much stronger

metaphysical terms than is suggested by his famous addresses in 1919 on the vocations of science and politics. The notion of *charisma* that is prevalent in his studies on authority suggests that Weber was aware early on that a completely material and empirical approach to reality is not sufficient, though he did not pursue this possibility.

The term *charisma*, which means the gift of grace and favor, has its origins in ancient Greek thought and is clearly a metaphysical and "theological" (in the broad sense) concept. In Weber's usage, too, the concept of *charisma* appears "as a metaphysical vehicle of man's freedom in history", and it serves as a metaphysical retreat from the stultifying empiricism and materialism of Weber's typologies of social action and legitimation (Gerth and Mills 1946b: 72). For instance, in his discussion of legitimate authority, charismatic authority is opposed to the routinized economic activity of bureaucratic rationalization, which revolutionizes with *technical* means and replaces the belief in the sanctity of traditional norms by compliance with rationally determined rules. In contrast, all extraordinary needs, those which transcend the sphere of everyday economic routines, have always been satisfied on a charismatic basis, and *charisma* overturns rational and traditional rules altogether and overturns all notions of sanctity for a newer subjection to the unprecedented and absolutely unique, and therefore to the divine (Weber 1978 [1914]: 1111).

Weber here appears almost ready to take a leap into the great transcendent metaphysical realm that he so staunchly regards as not-amenable to *Sozialwissenschaften*. As I discussed above, given that Weber seems to accept the possibility of mystical experience (otherwise, why would he assert that the empirical social sciences must be able to interpret such experience?), he must, at the very least, leave open the possibility of an otherworldly source from which the mystic derives his charismatic authority.

Characteristically, however, Weber shrinks from the otherworldly basis of this concept. He argues that *charisma* is not at all dependent upon an otherworldly source from which it emanates. Rather, *charisma* exists *in* this world in that it is a form of social authority that shapes the material and social conditions of this-world. Hence, although he recognizes *charisma* as a specifically creative and revolutionary force, he claims that his sociological use of the concept is purely empirical and value-free (1978 [1914]: 1117). Whether or not we accept Weber's claim that *his* use of *charisma* is empirical and objective, what matters is that at least there is a brief

opening in Weber's opus in which one catches a very quick glimpse of transcendence.

In its Weberian version, however, this brief opening to an immanent metaphysics is far more empirical and material than in Dilthey's holistic-hermeneutic *Geisteswissenschaften*. Having walked with the devil of rationalization as far as he could, Weber realizes, at long last, that meaning in life is not possible without a form of metaphysics. Having displaced transcendent metaphysics, Weber seems to recognize that the slide toward nihilism can only be resisted by another form of metaphysics: that of an immanent, organic metaphysics. The pressing question is whether Weber's organic metaphysics, in the form of an individualistic ethic of responsibility and a this-worldly *charisma*, is able to successfully rescue the last remnant of meaning in a meaningless world? The response of Muslim critics of modern knowledge to Weber's truly profound insight into the disenchanting nature of modern science is that such an insight needs to be taken further. Although Weber acknowledges value-relevance as the starting-point of social inquiry, and although he is mostly conscious of the perspectivalism that characterizes all meaningful, substantive social inquiry, including his own, Weber, like Dilthey in this regard, is so committed to the ideal of objectivity in the human sciences that he cannot conceive of science itself being the site of a struggle of ultimate values based on transcendence and immanence.

To claim science as a vocation for its own sake, and to leave it at that without suggesting how the modern sciences could once again be made meaningful, is to shirk one's responsibility; it is to flee from the goal of knowledge: the search for wisdom, by which man achieves contentment (and, in the view of believers, salvation). For Muslim critics, the paradox that Weber presents—the pursuit of the vocation of science for its own sake, thus extending its disenchanting reach into ever-more areas of life—can only be overcome by a framework that re-integrates the knowledge of what is the case with knowledge of what ought to be the case. It remains to be said that Weber also has no hierarchy of knowledge. True, Weber seems to allude to a hierarchical conception when he argues that the empirical sciences provide only the bare facts for the normative sciences, which shape those facts into meaningful statements according to a researcher's ultimate value structure. Yet Weber never places the sciences in any hierarchical, encompassing framework. For Weber, the differentiation of value spheres is so logically clear-cut that there can be no integrating framework; neither the hermeneutic circle nor the hierarchical chain can

reconcile the differentiation of ultimate values from concrete empirical science. Of course, Weber did not foresee that the very moment of science's extension into every area of life is also the moment that leads to its loss of stature in late modernity, as people increasingly realize the threat of nihilism.

From a critical Muslim point of view, Weber's profound and mature realization of the ultimate meaninglessness of the world, for those who believe that scientific knowledge is the only valid kind of knowledge, seems also to have gone hand in hand with the game that we all play as children: to see who can stare as long as possible without blinking. Weber's resoluteness to gaze into the heart of nihilism finally breaks, and he blinks by making explicit the immanent metaphysics that, until then, had remained largely implicit. Perhaps the matter is put more succinctly in Weber's own terms. Weber did aspire to go with the devil as far as he could, but, as I have indicated, he also retreated when he saw that the devil was leading him to nihilism. Did he part with the devil in time? Muslim critics can only concur with other metaphysically inclined Western critics such as Strauss (1953: 47), who was bewildered at Weber's belated insistence on the responsibility and sanity of the intellectual, after having brought us to the brink of nihilism with his unreasonable demand for logical consistency in a purely empirical, this-worldly science of concrete reality. Is it not the ultimate irony that Weber, the interpretive theorist of meaning and rationality, should lead us, logically, consistently, to the precipice of a meaningless world, with only the sliver of an organic immanent metaphysics to save us?

Conclusion

The Human Sciences and Questions of Meaning

If, as Charles Taylor argues, the human sciences are not simply sciences of concrete fact but, instead, are narratives of self-clarification of the Western experience of modernity, what does the shift from questions of ontology to questions of epistemology say about the transition to modernity? Part of the answer lies in the refusal to address the Big Questions in an integral manner. Whatever effect the development of the natural sciences has had on displacing traditional religious cosmologies, surely the development of the human sciences has played an equal, if not greater, role, because they have reduced the modern search for meaning to empirical sciences of concrete facts. The Kantian desire to formulate a newer, critical metaphysics that could meet the rigors of an empirical science, by being aware of its presuppositions and limits, culminates in Dilthey and Weber's pronouncing the end of speculative metaphysics and accepting the death of God. But the metaphysical need for a complete set of answers to a complete set of questions, as well as the metaphysical need for *otherworldly* transcendence, constantly foils their respective efforts to elaborate the scientific nature of the study of the *Geist* and the *Sozial*.

In the philosophy of the human sciences, this tension led Dilthey, on the one hand, to posit an ontological difference between the natural and human sciences and, on the other hand, to historicize and relativize metaphysics, that is to say, to reduce its scope. Eventually, however, Dilthey comes to accept the inevitability of the metaphysical mood in humanity, and he maintains the validity and the relevance of metaphysical thought to the knowledge of the human sciences. Aware of humanity's indomitable desire for self-transcendence, Dilthey yields to the possibility of intuitive knowledge and the search for something "soul-like" in an immanent kind of transcendence. Dilthey's

Geisteswissenschaften are inextricably tied, then, to the hermeneutic goal of the elaboration of meaning of the whole, and the Big Questions are never far from his conception of the human sciences. Dilthey (and Simmel) remains open, dialogically even, to metaphysical questions and to a sense of wonder.

In the practice of the human sciences, the tension between the Kantian desire for a critical science and the persistence of the metaphysical need has meant that establishing the legitimacy of the political and the social has been a conflictual process (*cf.* Singer 2004), which has required displacing or eliding the Sacred. For Weber, establishing the legitimacy of the social meant vanquishing the legitimacy of the religious, which he relegates to an intellectual sacrifice for weak men. The subsequent apotheosis of Weber's *verstehende* methodology as the interpretive mode *par excellence* in the human sciences has meant that substantive analyses of religion seek to understand the values that motivate religiously oriented social action, all the while denying the validity of the religious understanding of the human condition. This amounts to saying that irrational behavior is meaningful, since it is social, directed toward others from whom it elicits responses, but that it is not truthful. For Weber, irrational behavior rooted in non-scientific ways of knowing does not meet the criteria of truthfulness, since such ways of knowing do not mirror reality, which is accessible only to a formal, abstract, rational, critical science. The problem here is not that Weberian human science simply regards metaphysical and religious thought as anachronistic. Rather, it is that Weberian human science actually cannot tolerate other forms of thought as valid knowledges. Although he is a proponent of the differentiation of realms, Weber does not leave open the validity of other ways of knowing, which may be as valid as science. Hence, the differentiation of realms is also accompanied here by a monopolistic claim on knowledge.

Weber's commitment to an empirical science of concrete reality precludes the integration of science into a meaningful worldview. In contrast to Dilthey, Weber draws upon the neo-Kantian view that the sciences can only be integrated conceptually, that is, through the relations among concepts, but that they cannot be integrated hierarchically. That is, the sciences are integrated among themselves through the interconnections of their concepts. But science is *not* integrated with other spheres of life, and we are left with the differentiation of value spheres. Weber's methodological individualism, which also drives his view of modernity as quintessentially characterized by the

differentiation of value spheres, rejects holism in both its hermeneutic and hierarchical forms.

Weber was clearly aware of the paradox in the requirement to be both scientific and to provide meaningful knowledge of the human condition, but he suppressed the extent to which the metaphysical need kept recurring in his substantive work, here in the guise of *charisma*, there in the form of an organic metaphysics tied to an ethic of responsibility. Weber's commitment to an empirical science of concrete reality leads him *initially* to reduce all questions of ontology not to epistemology but to methodology. In so doing, questions of the meaning of human existence, which are central to Dilthey's *Geisteswissenschaften,* are pushed *initially* beyond the pale. One might have expected that, since Weber espouses the differentiation of realms as the defining feature of modernity, he would have accepted that religious knowledge is truthful in its own realm. Indeed, Stauth and Turner regard the entropic, polytheistic tendencies of Weber's immanent worldview as accepting the validity of intermediate, differentiated truths, with each realm having its own criteria for truth, its own set of values.

More generally, one might reasonably expect that he would allow us to ask the Big Questions in the realms of religion and philosophy. Certainly, Weber never says that modern man must stop asking the Big Questions. However, he does seem to suggest that to believe in the Big Answers, such as those provided by religious or ancient philosophical thought, after the disenchantment of the world, is to commit an intellectual sacrifice. According to Weber, while religious and philosophical knowledge may have helped to facilitate the process of disenchantment, and the increasing abstraction of thought, they no longer meet the criteria of truthfulness in a formally rational, disenchanted world. The process of disenchantment itself turns against religious and philosophical thought.

In accepting the inevitability of the process of disenchantment, Weber reduces the meaningfulness of the human sciences and replaces it with a wholly immanent conception of empirical knowledge and rationalization. He is ambivalent about this turn, but he keeps taking it. Moreover, his influence has itself contributed to the narrowing and parochializing of the human sciences and, consequently, to their irrelevancy to the larger public, because they can no longer cast any insight into the meaning of the world. If the human sciences cannot help us to answer the most fundamental, ultimate questions, then have they not become merely technical sciences? Having relegated the

mythic and metaphoric narratives of religion to an intellectual sacrifice, and having embraced the realist descriptions of empirical concrete science, does not Weber's *Sozialwissenschaft* replace meaning with technique?

The differentiation of value spheres is not simply a neutral description of the world; it is also a normative model for knowledge production. At the heart of the differentiation of value spheres is, in fact, the fragmentation to which it gives rise. The social and cognitive fragmentation and the consequent loss of meaning, which the human sciences purportedly describe in objective, neutral terms, are, in fact, a constitutive aspect of this approach to knowledge. Were we to follow Weber's methodological truth-claims and exclude all problems of ultimate meaning from the realm of science, the human sciences would not only cease to provide answers to the Big Questions, they would refuse even to ask them.

Fortunately, even Weber did not follow his methodological truth-claims to the letter. His preoccupation with Western exceptionalism ("Why in the West alone…") is, in fact, a preoccupation with small narrative and the process of self-clarification. The question of Western exceptionalism may not rank with the Big Questions of religion and philosophy, but it is a question in search of intermediate meaning. Hence, Weber himself tempered the disenchantment of the world not only by embracing the ethic of responsibility and the realm of politics, in which ultimate values may still be contested, but also by deploying the human sciences to provide answers to questions of intermediate meaning. This reminds us that, even for Weber, substantively, the human sciences ought not to become purely technical sciences. They ought to remain a part of the narratives of self-clarification that imbue the Western experience of modernity with some minimal meaning.

Whereas Weber, for all practical intents and purposes, proclaims the closure of the religious but then realizes the necessity of seeking consolation in an organic metaphysics, Habermas pushes further the postmetaphysical implications of Weberian thought. Habermas accepts Weber's argument that the differentiation of value spheres is a quintessentially modern phenomenon and that it is antithetical to the holistic perspective of religious and philosophical metaphysical thought. However, he softens Weber's tone by insisting that, in order to avoid relapsing into a negative metaphysics, postmetaphysical thinking will have to avoid the tendency to reverse such metaphysical claims as: that the whole is false, that everything is contingent, that there is no consolation whatsoever in a disenchanted world (Habermas

1992 [1988]: 145). For Habermas, postmetaphysical thought neither offers nor seeks any consolation whatsoever, not even in an organic metaphysics.

Ironically, however, while Habermas goes further than Weber in this respect, he leaves open the possibility for dialogue with those who continue to espouse religious metaphysics. For Habermas concedes that religion, as yet, is still necessary for normalizing discourse with the extraordinary and that, since science, as yet, is ineffective or unable to provide viable answers in these matters, it will have to abide and "coexist abstemiously" (Habermas 1992 [1988]: 145) with the presence of religious metaphysics. Hence, postmetaphysical thinking is able neither to replace nor to repress the metaphysical need (Habermas 1992 [1988]: 51), which remains and is still fulfilled by religion (see also Habermas et al. 2010).

What Habermas does not go far enough to acknowledge, though, is the dependency, the parasitic relationship of postmetaphysical reasoning with religious metaphysics.[1] Postmetaphysical reasoning can only go about its business of analyzing empirical, concrete reality, because it takes for granted that religion fulfills the metaphysical need. Thus, for it to be able to do what it does, postmetaphysical reasoning remains dependent on religious metaphysics. Does this mean that postmetaphysical reasoning relapses into just another negative metaphysics? No, not exactly, but it can only do what it does, because it concedes the necessity of a religious metaphysics. Apt are Simmel's words (1977 [1905]: 152, emphases in original): "actually there is a profound relationship between the absolutely complete immanence of all empirical historical research, which is immune to any metaphysical *incursion* or *interference*, and the sanctification of history by a divine teleological decree…Suppose that the concrete facts of life as such exhibit no metaphysical significance. Then the need to at least impute a metaphysical significance to life as a whole becomes even more pressing."

Immanence and Islamic Social Thought

The logic of Habermas's work is surprisingly similar to the logic of al-Faruqi's Islamization of Knowledge project. Al-Faruqi shares Habermas's (1981) desire to bring to completion the "unfinished project of modernity" by reorienting modernity on what al-Faruqi considers its original path—the search for universals and a redefinition of the role of Reason. For al-Faruqi, Islamic civilization is best

able to reorient modernity on the path initiated by the Enlightenment; after all, the Islamization of Knowledge project seeks to replace what it considers the pseudo-universalism of Western modernity with the true universalism of an Islamic modernity. Additionally, in its quest for its own version of universal, objective knowledge, al-Faruqi's project conceals a will-to-power that resembles the Enlightenment mode. In his defence of the virtues of antiquity against the "moral wilderness" of modernity, MacIntyre (1981) argues that the Enlightenment attempt to locate a universalist morality from a putatively objective position actually conceals the Enlightenment thinkers' own subjectivity and their will-to-power. Just as the Enlightenment's search for universality represented a particular moral code asserted over others, so, too, the Islamization of Knowledge project upholds its own moral code as universal, because, in its view, Islam is the only religion that truly synthesizes Reason with Revelation. Does this claim to universalism not conceal its own will-to-power? As an attempt to elaborate an Islamic modernity, the Islamization of Knowledge fails to alter *radically* the pre-existing form. Its vision of reconstruction is a shallow ideological reaction that ultimately fails, because it is too imbued with modernity's own spirit. Thus, the logic of Islamization of Knowledge further contributes to the de-traditionalization and rationalization of the world.

The possibility of an Islamic modernity is anathema to Nasr's project of re-enchantment. An Islamic modernity would be disastrous, because it would only further the profanation of the world, a process inherent in modernity itself, according to Nasr. Nasr and Weber are arguing in opposite directions, but they are both commenting on the *uniqueness* of modernity. Whereas Weber argues that the exceptionalism of the modern Occident resides in the pervasiveness of formal rationality, on Nasr's view the particular conglomeration of currents that has brought about the uniqueness of modernity also renders it an *anomaly* in the history of civilizations, for it is the only civilization that denies cosmological origins. For Nasr, modernity is both irredeemable and irremediable, since the minor reactions against modernity's rupture with the Sacred have not been able to suture the breach. Unlike Weber, who emerges as an ambivalent critic of modernity resigned to the disenchantment of the world, Nasr remains hopeful that it still is not too late to abandon *in toto* the path that leads to the iron cage.

Because he is so strongly rooted in the integrating frameworks of traditional philosophy and knowledge, Nasr recognizes that the

empirical analysis of immediate causation does not deny the divine role in history, just as rationalism in its own sphere does not threaten mysticism and intuition. However, we must note that Nasr's retrieval of medieval hierarchical modes of thought is marred by its reactionary opposition to modern notions of linear progress and evolution such that he is unwilling to acknowledge the loss of legitimacy of hierarchical thought in the modern age.

While Nasr is right to insist on the possibility of reversing the process of disenchantment, he is not justified in claiming that his own views have not been affected by modern principles in any way. For instance, Nasr's denial, publicly at least, that his position has been strongly influenced by modernity appears disingenuous, because his insistence, based on a *hadith*, that there is only decline and regress after the death of the Prophet, can be read as merely an inversion of the modern faith in unilinear evolutionary progress. Even though the Traditionalist position may refer to the perennialist, hence premodern, belief in the archetypal Fall of man, one cannot simply dismiss the fact that this reading of the inevitable decline of man is reactivated in the modern context of progress. The reactivation of the *hadith* exists in a directly inverse relation to the modern notion of progress. Moreover, Nasr's unrelenting criticism of evolutionism and progress overlooks the point that Darwin's theory, like Spencer's, has no inherent unilinear conception of progress; in Darwin's work, at least, there is no hierarchy of species that would justify Nasr's charge that evolution leads Man to forget God, because it suggests that Man can become perfect by means of evolution alone. If anything, Nasr could legitimately critique Darwin for his lack of teleology, for the lack of a purposeful view of evolution!

Although elements of their overall critique are still relevant, Nasr's and al-Faruqi's specific focus on a classical positivist model of knowledge, especially with respect to the human sciences, is outdated. Even though al-Faruqi makes references to Weber and Dilthey, he does not realize the extent to which both of them, but particularly Dilthey, were able to re-conceptualize the human sciences in interpretive terms; even Weber's *verstehendesoziologie*, though it never completely breaks from the ideal of objectivity as per the natural sciences, is rooted in neo-Kantian *axiological* analysis, the lack of which al-Faruqi decries in his critique of the social sciences. In each case, Nasr and al-Faruqi fail to acknowledge the extent to which interpretive modes had gained strength in Western academia even by the 1970s and 1980s, when the debate on reconstruction was at its height. They also do not explicitly

enough acknowledge the extent to which they are engaged in a dialogue with internal Western critiques of science.

Similarly, the tension that Manzoor identifies between Transcendence and immanence is important, and yet he ignores significant differences in the immanentist projects in the modern West, such as those of Dilthey and of Weber. As I have argued, it has become clear that, after declaring God and all other forms of transcendent metaphysics to be dead, modern social thought can stave off nihilism only by recourse to an immanent, organic metaphysics. Yet the lowering of the horizon of social thought has different implications, depending upon the form of immanent metaphysics that is proposed. Not all immanent metaphysics are the same, and I have argued that Dilthey's version is more open and flexible than Weber's.

Moreover, in taking the view that transcendence is definitive of an Islamic worldview, as opposed to the immanence of Christianity, to its logical but extreme conclusion, what al-Faruqi and Manzoor play down is that, in Islam, there is some tension between God's Transcendence and His Immanence. Al-Faruqi's and Manzoor's sharp dichotomy between Islamic transcendence and modern immanence can brook no middle ground between transcendence and immanence, such as is found in Sufism's overriding emphasis on the nearness of God to man. Even an Islamic worldview based on an overwhelmingly Transcendent notion of God must wrestle with the problem of His Immanence.

Muslim commentators such as those discussed here, or, more generally, Islamist ideologues such as Mawdudi and Qutb, who regard modern epistemology as the hallmark of the Age of *Jahilliya*, ought not to simply dismiss the immanent metaphysics of the human sciences as always and inevitably nihilist. As I have been arguing, they are well placed to point to the potential threat of nihilism, but it also behooves them to recognize that an immanent metaphysics has led the human sciences to lay bare the extent to which social reality is malleable and can, to some extent, be ameliorated. The proponents of the reconstruction of knowledge, especially Manzoor and al-Faruqi, need to pay more attention to the role of *human* mediation in the construction of human reality. The elaboration of social relations and psychological characteristics by the human sciences has provided considerable evidence of the social construction of reality and the seemingly immanent essence of social reality. In fact, it has been this gradual, pragmatic, and realist elaboration of social and psychological problems that has contributed to the amelioration of many social ills. The grandiose,

utopian and idealist conceptions of reality that too-often derive from a transcendent and religious view of the world have obfuscated the this-worldly aspect of social relations.

A Confusion of Horizons

As Ibn Khaldun's work demonstrates, it was possible, even in the pre-modern, Islamic worldview, to lower the horizon of thought so that due attention could also be paid to this-world, this intermediate realm of human social existence. Regrettably, the centrality of *asabiya* in Ibn Khaldun's theory of the rise and fall of societies led many twentieth century scholars (e.g. Schmidt 1967 [1930]; Rabi 1967; Lacoste 1984 [1966]) to conclude that he denies a religious teleological conception of history altogether. Hayden White (1959: 114), the great champion of humanism, takes this view to its extreme conclusion, when he writes that "Ibn Khaldun shifts his interest from a God he cannot know and from a humanity for which he has no feeling to the abstract mechanism which he pretends to find in historical materials." On White's view, Ibn Khaldun's cyclical rise and fall of societies is nothing but a commentary on the "futility of human action," and a pessimistic and fatalistic philosophy of history, shorn of a religious teleology on the one hand and of a redemptive belief in human free will on the other. According to White (1959: 116), unlike the philosophies of history enunciated by Comte and Voltaire, who call humanity to active participation in the historical process, or those enunciated by St. Augustine and Marx, who reject the historical world as a value in itself and point to the existence of a higher ideal that serves as an inspiration to the conquest of that world through self-transcending social action, Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history points to nothing but the "ceaseless repetition of the basic natural-historical mechanism." White thus aligns Ibn Khaldun's work with the "fragmentary, truncated and inclusive character of much of the work of Dilthey, Weber, and Troeltsch," who were unable to construct a science of society that could reconcile their intellectual commitment to the new, secular, and scientific human sciences with their older humanistic values.

What is striking about Schmidt's and White's respective views is that both of them take God out of Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history altogether: Schmidt regards Ibn Khaldun's God as coeval with nature, whereas White regards Ibn Khaldun's God as far too Transcendent. The only significant difference that remains between their claims is

that the former approves of the scientific character of this philosophy of history, whereas the latter condemns it for its nihilism.

The confusion surrounding Ibn Khaldun's work arises precisely because most of his modernist commentators have lost touch with the hierarchical conception of knowledge, with its presupposition of different orders of reality and their corresponding knowledges, in which Ibn Khaldun's analysis of the empirical causes of history is embedded. In reading Georg Simmel's (1977 [1905]) *The Problems of the Philosophy of History*, I am struck by how much insight a reading of Simmel could bring to Ibn Khaldun's modernist commentators. Simmel points out that the assumption that there is a transcendent purpose, end, or goal of history, that there is a Divine Being who will conclude the cosmic drama, only transforms the causal sequence of history into a teleological sequence; it does not alter the contents of history and the laws that connect them. Simmel writes:

> History as an inquiry describes the mechanism by means of which this end or purpose is realized. This is very much like the design of a machine which is constructed with certain human purposes in view; the causal forces which are responsible for its functioning cannot be influenced by the purpose of the machine as such. On the contrary, the purpose lies behind the mechanism, or the machine presupposes its purpose…[F]rom the standpoint of historical research, these issues [i.e., religious teleologies] are irrelevant. The description of the forces of history—*as if* they enjoyed an independent existence—forms the substance of empirical historical research. (1977 [1905]: 151–52, emphasis added)

When Ibn Khaldun describes the effective, causal forces at play in particular historical events, as for instance in his chapters on *asabiya*, he does so by implicitly placing them within an encompassing teleological framework. Hence, we come upon Ibn Khaldun's references to "God's wise plan with regard to his creation and the preservation of humankind"(1958b, v. 2: 328–29, 335). Simmel helps us to realize that the two explanations are not necessarily antithetical, because one can explain individual stages according to the laws of the mechanism itself, but the entire process can still be interpreted in terms of a religious teleology.[2]

What remains elusive in Simmel's analysis is that a hierarchical conception of knowledge, which frames Ibn Khaldun's *ilm al umran*, reconciles the two levels of explanation. Hence, to focus on the human role in the playing out of the Great Drama does not deny the Divine

Presence. It is precisely the hierarchical conception of the different orders of reality and of their consequent knowledges that allows Ibn Khaldun to synthesize historicist accounts of Muslim societies with religious beliefs about God's will, a synthesis that is difficult in the postmodern refusal of hierarchical frameworks.

The lowering of the horizon of social thought by searching for immediate, earthly causes is not in itself threatening to religious reason, much less an affront to God's sovereignty, so long as the overall hierarchical scheme is kept in mind. The Quran itself constantly exhorts this lowering of thought without, however, negating the link with Transcendence and divine intervention. While much has been made of the Quranic references exhorting humankind to ponder on natural phenomena, and their contribution to the development of a culture of curiosity about the natural sciences (Lotfalian 2004), much less attention has been given to the verses and surahs in the Quran that repeatedly encourage Muslims *and* non-Muslims to reflect on themselves, on human history, on the nature of social reality, without thereby threatening the connection to the ultimate essence of things, their purpose.[3] One must recognize that immediate earthly causes do not exhaust the chain of causality, which can never be fully explained. Rather, as the Quran instructs and as Ibn Khaldun notes, Muslims simply assert God as the first and immediate cause and as the last and ultimate cause. Between these poles human rationality may explore as far as possible.

Why did Ibn Khaldun turn his gaze toward the intermediate social realm? Why did he think a science of the social noble enough to deserve his attention? As I have argued, it was not simply because he thought it would be an auxiliary science in the aid of political philosophy. Ibn Khaldun turned his attention to the intermediate social realm because he was neither a philosopher nor a theologian. On the one hand, he wanted to understand the intermediate realm, because he disagreed with the philosophers' view that rational knowledge could lead to certainty about the supra-human realm and the ultimate end of things. He recognized that rational knowledge about the intermediate realm could provide much more certainty, but here, too, rational knowledge was supplemented by revelation and intuition. On the other hand, he also disagreed with the theologians that revelation alone was the only source of knowledge and social order. Ibn Khaldun turned to the intermediate social realm to demonstrate that, in fact, only a tiny minority of communities was based on divine revelation, which did not necessarily deny or exclude the possibility of the human discovery

of lesser truths. For Ibn Khaldun, it was clear that human beings do not need to rely on revelation alone, because although it does contain the most fundamental of truths, it does not contain all that could be known. For Ibn Khaldun, the intermediate social realm of human existence is the locus for the synthesis of rationality, revelation, and intuition. Hence, the science of the social requires not only rationality and empirical knowledge of history and the formal causes of the rise and fall of societies. It also requires intuitive knowledge and speculation. It requires not only the scholarly soul but also the mystical soul, since understanding adequately the nature of the intermediate realm requires more than sensory perception and empirical knowledge. It requires, as well, an intuitive awareness of the essence of things and a vision of the ultimate purpose and end of all things. Since the intermediate realm of human social existence is both material and spiritual, understanding human society requires both empirical rational demonstrative knowledge and intuitive apperceptions about the spiritual nature of social reality.

It is true that Ibn Khaldun does not speculate on the final purpose of history and social organization. The *Muqaddimah* is his commentary on social organization. As to its ultimate end in the cosmic drama, there is silence. Because Ibn Khaldun locates his science of the social between physics and metaphysics, in their classical sense, it touches both the knowable and the unknowable, yet he makes no claim that his science can unlock the secrets of the cosmos, that is, God's grand moral scheme behind history, through empirical or even intuitive knowledge. In terms of that which is unknowable, Ibn Khaldun cedes to faith in revelation. For Ibn Khaldun, there is neither linear progress nor linear regress. The rise and fall of nations corresponds to the perennial adherence and straying from man's own inner nature and the nature of social organization by every single community on earth. The cycle of strengthening and weakening *asabiya* is a mechanism of God's natural way.

His resolution to the paradox of the desire for critical thought and the need for metaphysics is salient, because his work demonstrates that modern social thought has made too much of the antagonism of religion and the human sciences. A different relation between religion and the human sciences is possible, a relation that does not necessarily threaten a religious understanding of the cosmos. Immanent, this-worldly explanations do not necessarily require severing the link with transcendent, otherworldly causes. Indeed, it is only by grasping the principle of immanence, without severing its connection to

transcendence, that Muslims, nay all human beings, can live up to their responsibility as *khalifatullah*, as God's vicegerents on earth. Ibn Khaldun's empirical observation of history points out that Muslims are no less subject to social and moral decline than are other human communities. Clearly, he does not expect that Muslims will be able to achieve the spiritual, moral, and social perfection for which their religious law was revealed, but the struggle for such perfection does constitute part of his eschatological vision.

Ibn Khaldun's recognition of the correspondence between Quranic views on man's inner nature and the nature of social organization with the specific events of history leads him to the view that God does not play favorites with human communities on earth. Despite an ontological difference between believers and disbelievers that will be recompensed by God in the hereafter, the social equivalence of all human beings, who exist between the level of animals and angels, means that, in the earthly realm, they are all equally governed by the fundamental nature of human and social organization. That is, regardless of creed, all human societies will be treated equally with respect to their rise and inevitable fall. The spirit of dialogue in Ibn Khaldun's theory of *asabiya* resides in the recognition that every human community is prone to the vicissitudes of the rise and fall of societies and in this rise and fall there ought not to be *ressentiment* and counter-*ressentiment* but a rueful note of recognition.

Ibn Khaldun's genius lies precisely in that he was able to rely upon a hierarchical framework of knowledge, differentiating levels in terms of both ontology and epistemology, to derive a theory of *asabiya* in which every human community is regarded as socially—though not necessarily morally—equivalent. Ibn Khaldun is able to present a science of the social not in spite of his mystical and hierarchical ontology but precisely because of it. Ibn Khaldun's work alerts us that the modern refusal of hierarchical thinking may have gone too far and that we need to retrieve the holistic and synthetic elements that are central to hierarchy, without thereby necessitating a return to premodern forms of social existence. A hierarchical framework of knowledge leads not only to the integration of the various disciplines within each of the human and natural sciences, but it leads also to the integration of the metaphysical and the empirical forms of human thought. The threat of nihilism that hovers over the rejection of metaphysical thought can be overcome if the human sciences are themselves placed within a hierarchical conception of knowledge in which the empirical level is but one level of reality.

Since a strong revival of hierarchical thought is unlikely at the present time, would a hermeneutic conception of the human sciences be better for Muslim social thinkers who remain committed to a holistic system of thought that can mediate the past and the present, the social and the cosmic, the immanent and the transcendent, the human and the divine? Quite possibly. But any turn to hermeneutics by Muslim scholars will not be without difficulty and tension. It is sure to be a painful process, since, in focusing on human mediation without the benefit of a hierarchical framework, one runs the risk of denying Divine Omnipotence (and of earning the wrath of the *ulama*). It is impossible to ignore the fact that the two leading Muslim hermeneuts in the twentieth century, Fazlur Rahman and Nasr Abu Zayd, both of whom began to espouse the role of human mediation, were driven out of their Muslim homelands (Pakistan and Egypt, respectively) into the bosom of the West for what the *ulama* in each country considered radically "unorthodox" views, if not apostasy.

Social Theory as Dialogue and Critique

Can Muslims get past the ethic of colonization that has confronted them and their responding obsession with power, in order to regain the desire for dialogue (Masud 2004), this time not with Christian missionaries or colonial administrators but with interlocutors who, on the surface at least, renounce all metaphysics? If a dialogue is to be transformative, Muslim critics must be willing to forego the nativism and *ressentiment* that leads them largely to pre-emptively dismiss the modern human sciences. Rather, they will need to acknowledge that much progress has been made in ameliorating social ills and in laying bare the human construction of much of social reality, even as the risk of nihilism has increased. They will need to re-appropriate Ibn Khaldun's work more successfully in order to demonstrate that another conception of the relation between religion and science is not just possible but also feasible in this day and age.

The possibility for transformative understanding is there, but it needs to be nurtured by a particular dialogical attitude, an attitude that Muslim intellectuals, to say nothing of ideologues and the neo-revivalist and revolutionary movements that follow them, can again genuinely open up to after they overcome the elements of nativism and *ressentiment* that have built up. This dialogical attitude does

not require disengaging with power, but it does require softening the obsession with power (Masud 2004). Indeed, there is already a reflexivity in the Quranic message about Islam's own position *vis-à-vis* other religions (of the Book). This relativization of itself as merely the latest expression of a perennial message—and the right of other Peoples of the Book to continue to believe in their pre-existing faith without harassment—needs to become more dominant. Whereas the global age requires taking a short step back from the brink of absolutes and a minimal relativization of one's beliefs and values, this potential already exists in Islamic teachings. Whether such teachings will be activated and become more prevalent or whether an extreme absolutism will continue to prevail is an open question, which will need to be answered by Muslims, who are still subject to the constraining structure of the Western socio-political order and the feelings of *ressentiment* that accompany it. The strong possibility exists of re-activating pluralistic, dialogical readings of Islamic sources and sciences, since the collision with others' horizons, through which one becomes aware of one's most deep-seated assumptions, itself necessitates the re-activation of dialogue. There are inklings that this may already be happening, though it will require tender nurturing by Muslims themselves.

Ibn Khaldun's theory of *asabiya* should serve as a reminder for Muslims today that, even though they criticize Jews and Christians for claiming to be God's chosen people, they, too, have no special covenant with God that guarantees their success in this world simply because of their proclamation of a particular theological creed, without living up to its ideals. And if, in keeping with Ibn Khaldun's theory of *asabiya*, Muslims now correctly perceive the social fragmentation and individuality of the West as a sign of its decline, then they need also to acknowledge that the West's sharp ascent may have been because of its adherence to God's Way. And in the rise and decline of the modern West, there ought not to be so much *ressentiment* as much as a rueful note of recognition and a hope for Muslims' own adherence to God's Way and to their renewal.

Still, if the dialogue between Islamic social thought and the modern human sciences is to be most transformative for both the Islamic and Western worlds, then modern human science will have to go farther in its re-appropriation of hermeneutics than merely acknowledging the search for meaning as one among other equally important constitutive interests. Given that it is the West that is dominant, the full-development of hermeneutic human sciences in the West is much to

be desired if the human sciences are to contribute to an understanding of the Muslim world and to the making of a more humane world. An important first step in taking seriously the truth-claims of the Other would be to dull the critical edge of the human sciences so that we do not simply dismiss the transcendent metaphysics of a religious message as ideology, false consciousness or false hope, as was the case for much of the twentieth century.

This will not be easy, of course, since the dialogical attitude is always threatened in Western social theory, partly because of the latter's hegemonic position, which permits it to pay little attention to Other voices, and partly because, when it does pay attention to them, it regards them as entirely ideological and unable to contribute meaningfully to dialogues internal to the West—which is, in effect, a form of counter-*ressentiment*. Western social theory's preference for various forms of Critical Theory or poststructuralist theorizing, rather than hermeneutic-dialogical understanding, threatens to kill the dialogue before it starts.

What, then, of the quality of the dialogue between Islam and modernity that I have sought to disclose at the site of the human sciences? Is a strong form of dialogue possible? I am under no illusion that disclosing such an implicit dialogue will lead to a "fusion of horizons" between Islamic reconstructions of knowledge and Western social theory, because there is, on the one hand, a repudiation of secularization and disenchantment, and, on the other hand, an increasing repudiation of metaphysics, even an immanent metaphysics.

Muslim scholars, who have rejected positivist conceptions of the human sciences and who, in turning to less materialistic and more interpretive options, have only until recently found the Weberian-interpretive paradigm, should hold out hope that the re-emergence of a fully hermeneutic conception of the human sciences continues to gain ground for it is only by coming to embrace the holism of hermeneutics that the modern human sciences can begin to engage respectfully with other conceptions of knowledge.

Certainly, no single theoretical approach would be an adequate "translation service" to overcome the gap between foundationalist religious conceptions of the human condition and anti-foundationalist, hermeneutic conceptions of the human condition. Yet the field of social theory as a whole, one which accommodates different kinds of knowledges, has the potential to provide the sort of "translation service" that is needed. However, since translations are always imprecise,

must we concede that, between Islam and modernity, understanding is urgently necessary but will be incomplete and muddled? Be that as it may, the urgent task that confronts a world in which the clash of civilizations threatens to become a self-fulfilling prophecy is to take more seriously what Other voices have to say about themselves and about us.

Notes

Introduction

1. "Neither America nor Russia, God is the Superpower." I heard this slogan being chanted in a march through the streets of Karachi in 1984, in support of the revolutionary regime in Iran.
2. In this study, immanence refers to this-worldly phenomena, experiences, or explanations, whereas transcendence refers to other-worldly phenomena, experiences, or explanations. Thus, when I write of the immanent metaphysics of the modern human sciences, I am referring to a form of thinking that, although not purely empirical and positivist, remains committed to this-worldly explanations. Transcendent metaphysics, thus, refers to other-worldly explanations.
3. In 1941, Mawdudi founded the *Jamaat-e-Islami* [The Party of Islam], an ideological and social welfare organization akin to the *Ikhwan al-Muslimun* [the Muslim Brotherhood], which was founded in 1928 in Egypt by Hassan al-Banna. While Mawdudi initially resisted the creation of the Pakistani state, once it became a reality, he left India for Pakistan and the *Jamaat* has increasingly played an influential role in Pakistani politics. In Egypt, the *Ikhwan* was initially an ideological and social welfare organization that later became politically active. The military wing of the *Ikhwan* was suspected of political assassinations and al-Banna was executed in 1949. Syed Qutb joined the *Ikhwan* around 1951 and was imprisoned by Gamal Abdel Nasser's regime from 1954 to 1964. He was released but imprisoned again soon thereafter and executed in 1966. The leftist Egyptian intellectual Hassan Hanafi comments that his own work follows Qutb's early writings rather than Qutb's later writings, which had become radicalized, owing to political repression and torture of Qutb: "I [i.e., Hanafi] did not go to prison, nor was my body tortured. If I had been imprisoned and tortured, I might have written *Signposts on the Road* [the revolutionary tract that Qutbhad written while in prison]. Instead, I continue to follow the path of the early Sayyid Qutb, who wrote *Social Justice in Islam*, *The Struggle Between Islam and Capitalism*, and *Islam and World Peace*" (cited in Esposito and Voll 2001: 68). The *Ikhwan*is much less politically active than it was once. Mawdudi and Qutb are neo-revivalists in that they draw in part upon the legacy of the eighteenth-century revivalist

Wahhabi movement, which regards cultural accretions as the cause of decline in Muslim societies.

4. I refer to Khomeini as a revolutionary not just for his politics but also for his religious thought, since his notion of the *vilayat-e-faqih* [the guardianship of the jurisconsult] overturns centuries of Shia thinking on the necessity of political quietism until the appearance of the Imam Mahdi, who will restore justice and equity on earth.
5. This sense of alienation has been described in Jalal al-e Ahmad's (1984 [1962]) book *Gharb-Zadegi*.
6. A good example of this is Abdulaziz Sachedina's (2001) *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism,* which is unmindful of the point that it is not the origin of particular elements but the social whole in which those elements are currently embedded that imbues them with meaning.
7. The Marxist rejection of dialogue has not been total, of course. There has been some Christian-Marxist dialogue, such as in Liberation Theology and in the early work of the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre.

1 Critique and Dialogical Understanding

1. For the sake of accuracy, it is worth noting that Huntington's thesis portrays the emerging New World Order as increasingly dominated by *three* civilizational actors: the West, the Islamic world, and the Sino-Confucian countries. Nevertheless, it is the antagonism and friction between the West and the Muslim world that has become the focus of the clash of civilizations debate.
2. The five pillars of faith in Sunni Islam are: declaration of faith and belief in the oneness of God and in the prophethood of Muhammad (*shahadah)*; prayer (*salah);* fasting (*sawm);* alms (*zakah);hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah).* In Shiah thought, the five fundamentals of faith (*usul al-din)* are: monotheism (*tawheed*); justice (*adl*), especially as God's supreme quality, prophethood (*nabuwah*); vicegerancy (*khilafatullah*, i.e., the task of embodying God's Will on earth) (the belief in the imamate of Ali and his select progeny); and resurrection (*qiyamah*).
3. Although, in practice, it has often been the case, the distinction between explanatory and interpretive models is not as clear-cut as my presentation may suggest at this point. I return to this problem below.
4. According to Rodinson, Weber treats as Islamic civilization not for what it is in itself but always for what it lacks in comparison with the modern Occident.
5. Aijaz Ahmad (1992) harshly and sometimes unfairly criticizes Said for not adequately crediting the earlier work of other Third World scholars, such as Anwar Abdel Malek and Syed Hussein Alatas, who were not based in the elite centres of the Western metropolis. I discuss this briefly in Chapter 3.
6. For instance, Habermas (1988 [1967]: 170) wrote: "Authority and knowledge do not converge. Certainly, knowledge is rooted in actual tradition; it remains bound to contingent conditions. But reflection does not wear itself out on the facticity of traditional norms without leaving a trace. It is condemned

to operate after the fact; but, operating in retrospect, it unleashes retroactive power. We are not able to reflect back on internalized norms until we have first learned to follow them blindly through coercion imposed from without. But as reflection recalls that path of authority through which the grammars of language games were learned dogmatically as rules of worldview and action, authority can be stripped of that in it that was mere domination and dissolved into the less coercive force of insight and rational decision".

7. See, especially, Habermas's dialogue with Borradori (2003: 36–37) on the role of hermeneutics in understanding other cultures.
8. Habermas (1992 [1988]: 138) writes, for example, that "[t]he merging of interpretive horizons, which according to Gadamer is the goal of every process of reaching understanding, does not signify an assimilation to 'us'; rather, it must mean a convergence, steered through learning, of 'our' perspective *and* 'their' perspective—no matter whether 'they' or 'we' or both sides have to reformulate established practices of justification to a greater or lesser extent. For learning itself belongs neither to us nor to them; both sides are caught up in it in this same way. Even in the most difficult processes of reaching understanding, all parties appeal to the common reference point of a possible consensus, even if this reference point is projected in each case from within their own contexts."
9. Euben (1999: 186, fn. 13) criticizes Roy's claim that Islamism does not have a political theory because it rejects political philosophy; according to Euben, such a claim only makes sense if political theory is understood in terms of particular premises and conclusions, rather than a field of inquiry defined by certain questions. See the discussion in Chapter 3 on the rudimentary elements of a philosophical critique of modernity in the thought of Qutb and Mawlana Maududi.
10. Although I have indicated how Arkoun directs this critique toward Habermas, this point can also be raised against Foucault's initial captivation with the Iranian revolution and his view of it as expressing the unified collective will of the Iranian population, a view that went against the Foucauldian critique of essentialism (see Afary and Anderson 2005).
11. It is not surprising to note that Roy (1994 [1992]: 205, fn. 10) considers Arkoun's oeuvre as the only "true 'critique' of Islamic thought from within…Arkoun endeavors to find the original 'intention,' the 'Quranic truth' as opposed to the 'Islamic truth' ".
12. See the discussion by Ramadan (2001: 203–28) on the differences between the tragic rebellion of Prometheus and the serene submission of Abraham as archetypes in modern Western thought, on the one hand, and Islamic thought, on the other.
13. See the useful insights of Panikkar (1999 [1978]; 1979) on the difference between various forms of interreligious dialogue and between *inter-* and *intra-*religious dialogue. Panikkar regards intra-religious dialogue as an ontological issue: it is in human nature to seek to discover within itself the whole human world. In this, Panikkar comes close to Gadamer's "fusion of horizons".

14. Notwithstanding the radical difference that I have posited between a hermeneutic return to foundations and a deconstructive (false) promise of newer creative meanings and relations, there is some convergence between Gadamerian hermeneutics and Derridean deconstruction on the unsaid; the convergence is not entirely surprising since Gadamer and Derrida follow different aspects of the linguistic turn in Heideggerian thought (Michelfelder and Palmer 1989). Here, I want merely to note the role of the unsaid in hermeneutic dialogue: in the Editor's Introduction to Gadamer's essays in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, David Linge writes that "each word has around it what Hans Lipps has called the 'circle of the unexpressed,' which bears directly on the meaning of the language. In every moment of dialogue, the speaker holds together what is said and addressed to the other person with the 'infinity of the unsaid.' It is this infinity of the unsaid—this relation to the whole of being *that is disclosed in what is said*—into which the one who understands is drawn (Linge 1976: xxxii, emphasis added).
15. Albeit in quite different contexts, this is remarkably similar to what Richard Rorty, despite his anti-foundationalism, calls "final vocabularies." But if there is no ultimate, metaphysical grounding to one's philosophy, how then is it possible to claim "*final* vocabularies"? Would not such vocabularies need continually to be revised?

2 Muslim Reconstructions of Knowledge: The Cases of Nasr and al-Faruqi

1. For contrasting overviews of Muslim attempts at reconstruction of knowledge and the ensuing debate, see Sardar (1989b and 1989c), who is a proponent of reconstruction, and Abaza (2002) or Stauth (2002), who are critics of reconstruction.
2. Nasr was born in Tehran in 1933 in a highly educated and religious family. He came to America in 1945 and completed an undergraduate degree in physics from MIT, a Master's degree in geology and geophysics, and a PhD in the history of science from Harvard in 1958. He returned to Iran and became Professor at the Faculty of Letters at Tehran University from 1958–1979, when he fled into exile. In 1973–1974, he established the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy under the patronage of Shahbanou (Empress) Farah, and in 1978 he was the head of her cultural bureau. It was these connections to the Pahlavi regime that precipitated his exile after the Revolution. Living in America since 1979, he has held positions at various universities: from 1979 to 1984 at Temple University he was a colleague of al-Faruqi's; currently he is University Professor in the Department of Religion at George Washington University. For a detailed autobiographical account, see the volume on Nasr in the Living Library of Philosophers' Series edited by Hahn et al. (2001).
3. René Guénon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Titus Burckhardt, Frithj of Schuon, and Huston Smith are among the well-known proponents of the School. See

Smith (2001) for a brief and insightful overview. Sedgwick (2004) provides a sensationalistic and somewhat speculative account of the Traditionalist School and of Nasr's role in it.

4. Huston Smith (2001: 142–43) writes: "Intellective knowledge derives from a distinctive noetic faculty that St. Thomas and the Scholastics called the *intellectus,* the Greeks called *nous*, Vedantists called *buddhi*, Buddhists call *prajna*, and Muslims call *aql*."
5. Nasr (2001a: 311) distinguishes an intellectual intuition of God from the mystical experience of God known as Bliss, though the two can often go together.
6. In contradistinction to the sociologists of Islam and Muslim societies who have drawn upon Weber extensively (e.g., Turner 1978, 1974; Stauth, 2002, 1998; Schlucter, 1999; Zubaida 1993 [1989]), protagonists in the literature on reconstruction have been quite reticent to engage deeply with Weber, except for Nasr's passing comment about wanting to reverse the *Entzauberungprozess* and Syed Naquib al-Attas's description of the process of secularization(1985: 16; also cited in Stauth 2002: 222). Certainly there are important problems with Weber's sociology of Islam, as I discuss in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, the difficulties alluded to here and in Chapter 5 do not preclude what could in other ways prove to be a fruitful dialogue for scholars to take up (see, for instance, Wolf-Gazo 2005).
7. Nasr delivered his first public speech after the events of 9/11 in Toronto on Dec. 19, 2001.
8. After spending a few years as a visiting professor in Canada, Pakistan, and the USA, in 1964 he became an associate professor at Syracuse University, and moved to Temple University in 1968. For specific details of these sojourns, see Ghamari-Tabrizi 2004b, 1998. Al-Faruqi and his wife, Lois Lamya, a scholar of Islamic art, were murdered at their home in Philadelphia in 1986. The police concluded that the murders were the result of a bungled robbery attempt, although some close affiliates of al-Faruqi implicated Jewish organizations. Ghamari-Tabrizi (1998: 73–74) recounts that 4,000 people attended the funeral, and that a few months later at a memorial service in honor of the al-Faruqis, among the dignitaries in attendance were Professors Yvonne Haddad and John Esposito, two of the leading scholars of Islam in America.
9. See, for instance, *On Arabism: Urubah and Religion* (1962). His final major publication, co-authored with his wife, Lois Lamya, is *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (1986).
10. See, for instance, Ilyas Ba-Yunus and Farid Ahmad's *Islamic Sociology* (1985); Akbar S. Ahmad's *Toward Islamic Anthropology* (1986)*;* IIIT's *Toward Islamization of Disciplines* (1989), and early issues of *AJISS*. Safi (1993) provides a useful summary of the first decade of the Project and a noteworthy internal critique. Taha Jabir al-Alwani (2005), one of the successor's to al-Faruqi, has slightly broadened the scope of the Islamization of Knowledge project by admitting that the project had become too narrowly focused on practical issues (e.g., the production of textbooks), while

continuing al-Faruqi's insistence that the project reorients knowledge on its universalist path by realigning revelation with the book of nature, a realignment that is only possible in Islam. In this way, like al-Faruqi, al-Alwani deposes the modern Western epistemic claim to universality and replaces it with a claim of the universality of an Islamic episteme.

11. The aftermath of 9/11 jeopardized the activities of IIIT, whose office was raided and its computers confiscated. Subsequently, IIIT has been cleared of any wrongful activities.
12. Al-Faruqi's point applies just as forcefully to educational institutions in Turkey and Iran during the Kemalist and Pahlavi regimes. However, since 9/11, the traditional *madrasah* system has come under scrutiny in many Muslim states; in Pakistan, the state is now beginning to regulate the curricula of the *madrasahs*, just as it regulates the curricula of the public school system.
13. See the constitution of Madinah (Kurzman 1998).
14. Al-Faruqi mistakenly conflates Dilthey's historicism with a sociology of knowledge.
15. Ghamari-Tabrizi (1998: 104) points out that, after the death of al-Faruqi, Taha Jabir al-Alwani sought to include Nasr and Fazlur Rahman in the activities of the IIIT and to move the Islamization of Knowledge project away from such an "ideological *cum* political venture."
16. Since I do not discuss this in the next chapter, it is worth mentioning here that Ibn Khaldun rejects the biological basis of racial differences. For Ibn Khaldun, the differences among human racial groups are attributable to environmental and geographic, not inherent biological, factors. See in particular the Third and Fourth Prefatory Discussion in *The Muqaddimah* (1958b [14th c.] v. I: 167–76).
17. As I pointed out above, al-Faruqi's successor al-Alwani recognizes this issue.
18. I am citing here the work of ZiauddinSardar (1984a, 1989b, 1989c, 1991, 1998), perhaps the most vocal critic of al-Faruqi, as reflective of the *Ijmali* position. Other writers working from the *Ijmali* position include the aforementioned Manzoor (1984, 1989, 2001, 2003); Merryl Wyn Davies (1988, 1991); and Munawer Anees (1984, 1991). However, for the purposes of this discussion, Manzoor's views on modern political and social theory and Islamic worldview premised on Transcendence are far more relevant, whereas Sardar's interests are in natural science and technology.
19. Stauth and Abaza have collaborated closely for many years in their analyses of the reconstruction of knowledge literature and, consequently, reach similar conclusions. One of the obvious differences in their respective accounts is that whereas Stauth restricts his attention to the development of this literature in South-East Asia, that is, to the so-called periphery of Islam, Abaza compares its development in Egypt and in Malaysia, that is, in the core and periphery. It may seem odd, then, that I treat Stauth somewhat separately from Abaza, whose work I am now analyzing in connection with Stenberg. My rationale for doing so is that Stauth's treatment of the question of the reconstruction of knowledge and modernity is much more theoretically

rigorous than is Abaza's (2002) recent work; moreover, whereas Stauth (2002: 38) claims his research methodology is an integration of biographical and ethnographic research methods, Abaza and Stenberg are much more inclined toward a discursive analysis of the literature.

20. Pervez Hoodbhoy (1991), a positivist critic of reconstruction, continues to argue that scientific facts are "hard facts," regardless of the worldview underlying their discoveries; hence, qualifiers such as "Islamic science" or "Islamic social science" are irrelevant for him. Enough has been written in the philosophy and history of science to disqualify this staunch position that it need not detain us further.
21. Al-Alwani is more attuned to the intercultural dialogue that motivates the projects of reconstruction than was al-Faruqi.
22. For instance, Stauth(2002: 225–26) suggests that Syed Naquib al-Attas's aversion to Western sociology stems from the latter's rebellion against his older brother, Syed Hussein Alatas (1977a, b, a leading sociologist of South-East Asia whose *The Myth of the Lazy Native* and *Intellectuals in Developing Societies* were published prior to Said's *Orientalism*. The different spellings of their surname indicates their respective views on cultural authenticity and Westernization. Irrespective of the psychological and familial reasons at play, surely there are legitimate concerns with the presuppositions of sociology, and with the philosophy of the social sciences more generally, that need to be given legitimacy, rather than minimized as though it were merely sibling rivalry.
23. Given Nasr's avowed traditionalism and his trenchant critique of modernity, Stenberg's reading of Nasr's project as articulating an Islamic modernity is fundamentally flawed.

3 The Putative Modernity of Ibn Khaldun

1. The *Muqaddimah* is the *Prolegomena* to the *Kitab al-Ibar,* which is known popularly as the *Universal History*. What came to be known as the *Muqaddimah*, even in Ibn Khaldun's time, is actually a short Introduction and Book One of six books that comprise the *Kitab al-Ibar*. There has been much debate about the correct translation of the full title of Ibn Khaldun's *Kitab al-Ibar*. In Arabic the full title is: *Kitab al-Ibar wa diwan al mubtada wal khabar fi ayyam al arab wal ajam wal barbar wa man asaruhum min dhawi al sultan al akbar*. Franz Rosenthal's (1958 v. I: 13, fn. 28) literalistic translation renders this as: *The Book of Lessons and Archive of Early and Subsequent History, Dealing with the Political Events Concerning the Arabs, Non-Arabs, and Berbers, and the Supreme Rulers Who Were Contemporary With Them*. But see also Muhsin Mahdi's rendition (1964 [1957]: 63–73), and especially his enlightening discussion on the meaning of the word "Ibar."
2. Muhsin Mahdi (1964 [1957]) renders *ilm al umran* as a science of the social, although the term could also lend itself to being rendered more literally as a science of (urban) society. In order to avoid the endless disputes over

terminology, I prefer to regard it as a science of the social, which encompasses both cultural and material reality, urban and rural forms of sociality. Moreover, my rendering avoids the problem of whether or not the term "sociology" ought to only be used for the modern discipline.

3. No relation to Franz Rosenthal, the English translator of the *Muqaddimah*.
4. I heed Laroui's (1987) salutary note of warning that Orientalists invariably reduce every discussion pertaining to Muslims and Muslim societies back to Islam, but in this case it was warranted.
5. The earliest translations of Ibn Khaldun's work into European languages were not of the *Muqaddimah*, but of those sections of the *Kitab al-Ibar* (i.e., of the *Universal History*) that pertained to the Arab "invasion" of the Maghreb. The translation of this section by de Sacy (1826–1827 [1806]) and the later translation of the entire *Muqaddimah* by his student de Slane (1862–1868) were part of a process of legitimizing French rule in the Maghreb as merely the latest in a series of foreign occupations of Berber territory. (See al-Azmeh (1981); Said (1978 : 123–30); Lacoste 1984 [1966]; and Becker and Barnes (1961 [1938]: 266).
6. See, for instance, Ibn Khaldun's more recently discovered manuscript on Sufism, *Shifa al-Sail li Tahdhib al-Masail* (The Healing of the Seekers). As recently as 1957, Ibn Khaldun's authorship of this text was largely unknown or doubted. Mahdi (1964 [1957]: 297, fn. 2) refers to it in one footnote and accepts Ibn Khaldun's authorship of it. F. Rosenthal (1958: xlv, fn. 47a) refers to this "hitherto unknown work of Ibn Khaldun" in his own footnote on Mahdi's citation. See also the discussion of the mystical versus the scholarly soul in *The Muqaddima* (1958b, v.1: 197–202).
7. Volume, chapter, and page numbers refer to F. Rosenthal's (1958 three-volume English translation of the *Muqaddimah*. Chapter VI comprises the last part of v. 2 and the entirety of v. 3 in Rosenthal's translation.
8. Giambattista Vico (1961 [1744]: 52–53) makes a similar remark three centuries later about his *Scienza Nuova*.
9. On the "Ways of God," the *Sunnat Allah* (Gibb 1933), see the following Quranic verses 33: 62; 35:43; and 48:23. Ibn Khaldun (see, e.g., 1958b, v. 1: 173 and v. 2: 99, 103, 132, 134, and many other instances) ends many of his sections with these references.
10. Al-Hallaj (ca. 858–922), the renowned mystic, was executed for failing, in his non-ecstatic state, to recant his ecstatic utterance "I am the Real" (*Cf.* Shehadi 1984).
11. The four Rightly Guided Caliphs were Abu Bakr al-Siddique, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, and Ali ibn Abi Talib, whose collective rule (632–61) is known as the Rashidun Caliphate.
12. Particularly striking is his defense of the Abbasid caliphs Harun al-Rashid and al-Mamun against the popular view that depicted them as drunkards and incompetent caliphs (1958b, v. 1: 33–40).
13. When he documents the vicissitudes of various ruling dynasties, Ibn Khaldun (1958b, v. 1: 305; v. 2: 117; and many other instances) often refers to the following Quranic (21: 89) verse: "God inherits the earth and whomsoever is

upon it. He is the best Heir"; as well as the Quranic verses (24: 44 and 73: 20) that refer to the alternation of day and night (1958b, v. 1: 296, 346; v. 2: 153; and many other instances).

14. More specific comments (1958b, v. 1: 315) pertain to the continued rule, despite the weakening of group feeling, of the Sinhajah dynasty in the Maghreb "until God permitted their dynasty to be wiped out."

4 Dilthey and the Problem of Immanence

1. Volume XXII of Dilthey's German *GesammelteSchriften* was published in 2002. The publication of the proposed six-volume translated series *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works*, edited by Rudolf Makreel and Frithj of Rodi, is a major event in bringing Dilthey's work to the English reading public. Hitherto, his work had been translated into English on a piecemeal basis. In this series, Volumes 1 and 3 are the most relevant for my purposes: Volume 1 (Dilthey 1989 [1883]) of the *Selected Works* series brings together Dilthey's first volume of the *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (*Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften)* and drafts of his never-completed second volume, which appeared in separate issues in the *GesammelteSchriften*. Volume 3 (Dilthey 2002 [1910]) of the *Selected Works* series presents Dilthey's "Studies Toward the Foundation of the Human Sciences", written circa1904; *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (*Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*) written circa 1910 ,; and *Plans for a Continuation of the Aufbau* and other various drafts, plans and outlines for writings on the human sciences. More specifically, I'm focusing on Dilthey's (1989 [1883]) early work in the *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (*Einleitung)* and *Drafts for Volume 2* of the *Einleitung*, and on his later, more explicitly hermeneutic approach to the human sciences in (Dilthey 2002 [1910]) *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (*Der Aufbau*) and the *Plans for a Continuation of the Aufbau*.
2. As a corollary, Dilthey holds that the disastrous error of the Historical School is to reject abstractions for dim feelings about a living, irrationally powerful reality that transcends all the knowledge which is based on the principle of sufficient reason (Dilthey 1989 [1883]: 99).
3. After his return to hermeneutics, Dilthey (2002 [1910]: 25) distinguishes between four classes of knowledge: conceptual cognition of reality; the positing of values; the determination of purposes; and the establishment of rules. The foundation of the human sciences must extend to all these classes of knowledge.
4. Cf. the words of Meinecke: "Historicism has the power to heal the wounds it has caused by the relativizing of all values, provided that it can find the men to convert this '-ism' into the terms of authentic life" (cited in Manzoor 1999: 14–15, fn. 34). The *Ijmali* theorist Manzoor complains that Meinecke fails to provide a clue as to how or by whom this "-ism" may be so converted.
5. Although the neo-Kantians did not share Dilthey's view of the historicity of the subject, Bambach argues that Dilthey did share the neo-Kantian

perspective on historical relativism, anarchy of values, classification of the sciences and the criteria of historical judgment.

6. Plantinga (1980: 159) suggests that a theistic philosophy, such as that a Creator has established an intrinsic harmony between the knower and the known, could also lead to a theory of understanding. Of course, Dilthey has already eschewed such a philosophy.

5 Weber: From Nihilism to an Organic Metaphysics

1. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (1978, v.2: 805, fn. 25), the editors of the English edition of *Economy and Society*, cite a number of sources, aside from the work of Becker, such as Ignaz Goldziher, upon which Weber relied for his understanding of Islamic law.
2. For instance, he writes: "But we would have to regard as unique in the hagiology of an ethical religion of salvation Muhammad's dictum expressing doubt about the ethical character of a person who has abstained from eating meat for forty days" (Weber 1978 [1914]: 624–25). Similarly incorrect is Weber's (1978 [1914]: 790) imputation to Muslims of the dogma that Allah had physically created individual copies of the Quran. Perhaps Weber has in mind the Asharite dogma of the uncreated miraculous nature of the Quran, but this is not the same as believing that Allah had created individual copies.
3. As an act of "personal de-colonization," at one point in his career Bryan Turner (1978: 9) renounced Weberian analysis of Islam for a historical materialist perspective, only to return to it later.
4. Weber is a prescient critic of vulgar historical materialism and, as I will argue below, a perceptive observer of the perspectivalism of all social knowledge—indeed, that subjectivity is what makes social knowledge so significant: the meaning that a topic has for *us*. Yet it is surprising that Weber was unable to see that the "bargaining culture of the West," to use Charles Taylor's phrase, may not be appropriate elsewhere, nay everywhere, as in his view of the this-worldly, economic-rationality of the origins of all religion.
5. To be more precise, we may distinguish the following five forms of teleology in Weber's (1975b [1903–1905]: 145–7) opus: (1) interpretation of processes in terms of their purposes—this can also refer to organisms and is not just restricted to mental life or human action; (2) means-ends thinking, i.e., causal relations; (3) axiological relations; (4) certain expectations have an empirical probability of realization that approaches certainty; and (5) will and volition.
6. According to Huff (1984: 50), Weber ignores Dilthey's turn to hermeneutics, first, because, unlike Weber, Dilthey did not formulate sharp conceptual ideas and work them out in detail and, second, because Dilthey had by then suffered a humiliating defeat by critics, such as the psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus and the neo-Kantians Wilhelm Wundt and Heinrich Rickert.

Huff may or may not be correct in the reasons that he cites, but he does not realize the extent to which the loss of the hermeneutics approach has been detrimental to the subsequent development of the social sciences.

7. Weber was not a neo-Kantian, as Rickert (1986 [1902]: 9) points out in his Preface to the third edition of *The Limits of Concept Formation in the Natural Sciences: a Logical Introduction to the Historical Sciences*, which he dedicated to the memory of Weber. However, to what extent Weber was influenced by Rickert, and vice versa, has always been a source of contention and even led to a cooling of relations between Rickert and the philosopher Karl Jaspers. Apparently, five days after Weber's death, in a conversation with Jaspers, Rickert referred to Weber as his pupil and suggested that Weber's work would have limited significance, to which Jaspers retorted that if Rickert were to be mentioned in the future, it would be as a note to Weber's work (for an English language account of this exchange, see, among others, Oakes 1988: 9–10).
8. Weber also refers to natural sciences as nomological sciences.
9. Although the inconsistency between Weber's methodological and substantive work has been widely recognized, there is much debate in the secondary literature about the putative unity of Weber's opus. See, for instance, Oakes (1977, 1988); Tenbruck (1980); Hennis (1983);Schlucter (1981, 1996).
10. As editor of the *Archiv fur Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik,* Weber (1949b [1904]: 60–67) adopts the new terminology and writes that *Sozialwissenschaft* is neither a foundational science, à la Dilthey's developmental psychology, nor even a general encompassing science à la Comte's social physics. Rather, it is a deliberately one-sided treatment of the socio-economic aspect of culture, a technical expedient benefiting from the division of labor.
11. According to Oakes (1988), Weber's central problematic, his *Fragestellung*, is a methodological one on the objectivity of the social sciences, a problematic that is part and parcel of the neo-Kantian framework. Oakes' view of Weber's central problematic and his reading of Weber's ties to the neo-Kantians has been the subject of much heated criticism in the secondary literature on Weber (see Tenbruck 1980; Schluchter 1981; Hennis 1988), so much so that Sica (1988: 95) comments that more has been written about some of Weber's methodological essays, which Weber himself openly disparaged, than about Weber's (1978 [1914]) *Economy and Society.* In fact, Weber's substantive work itself minimizes the importance of the methodological disjunction between empirical assertions and practical evaluations. Although, in his methodological essays, Weber consistently emphasizes the logical aspects of the *Kulturwissenschaften* and the *Naturwissenschaften*, he does not get bogged down in epistemological issues for too long, because he does not want to lose sight of the substantive-empirical problem itself. For instance, Weber (1975b [1903–1905]: 242, fn. 26) writes that "[a]lthough the renewed interest in epistemological problems is healthy, it can produce a dangerous tendency: the temptation to resolve empirical problems by employing logical principles. The result would be a renaissance of scholasticism." In

view of these remarks, I do not want to unnecessarily prolong the discussion on Weber's methodology much more, though the discussion on methodology is useful to the extent that it provides a comparison with Dilthey's outlook on the human sciences and their ontological difference from the natural sciences.

12. So strong was Weber's rejection of holism that Rickert (1986 [1902]: 9), in the Preface to the third edition of his book, *The Limits of Concept Formation in the Natural Sciences*, describes Weber's incomplete oeuvre at his untimely death as follows: "Thus the work of this scholar—as a whole man, capable as few are of forming a whole work—inevitably remained a fragment, *as if the infirmity of our time could no longer endure anything whole*" [emphasis added].
13. The retrospective recognition of Nietzsche's influence in social theory has, of course, much to do with post-structuralist and postmodern scholarship, most notably through the work of Foucault. However, some commentators have pointed directly to Nietzsche's lasting influence on Weber's social theory. See, for instance, Eden (1983); Hennis (1988); Stauth and Turner (1988); Turner (1993 [1992]).

Conclusion

1. Winch (1964) describes the relationship of modern, Western concepts of witchcraft and magic as parasitic on, as well as perversions of, religious and scientific concepts, because it is impossible to discuss witchcraft and magic within the bounds of concepts peculiar to them. I am slightly modifying Winch's sense of the term.
2. In the discussion on the craft of midwifery, Ibn Khaldun (1958b, v.2: 368–71) implies that a teleological process is at work even in the unborn fetus's desire to come out of the womb and in the baby's desire to seek its mother's breast to feed. *Cf.* Weber's treatment of teleology, which I discuss in Chapter 5.
3. See, e.g., 3: 137–38; 12: 109–11; 30: 9–10; 22: 45–46.

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