# Justice & Responsibility

## Cultural and Philosophical Foundations

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**(eds.)**

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**The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy**

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# Cultural Islam:
# An Alternative to Political Islam

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Globalization, or the process of the global economic, political and cultural integration and unification of the modern world, will intensify the standardization of cultural norms and values on a global scale. The rapid penetration of the technical and scientific achievements of the Western world into all spheres of life has forced other cultures into direct contact with an unfamiliar civilization.

Different cultures have interacted before, of course; convergence of cultures is a frequent occurrence in history. But the peculiarity of the current processes of cultural interaction is that globalization, which is predicated on the technological superiority of the West, creates a situation of cultural hegemony that is perceived by members of other non-Western civilizations as a threat to their cultural and ethnic identity.[1] This gives rise to the threat of assimilation to Western culture, which entails the danger of loss of national and religious identity. Thus the problem of interaction between cultures in a globalizing world is essentially the problem of how, in the inevitable encounter with the West, non-Western peoples can preserve their own cultural and national traditions, or in other words, how they can find an optimal balance between their own traditions and the newly introduced values of the West.

There are different approaches to the interaction of cultures in the era of globalization: a) the claim to hegemony of one culture; b) dialogue aimed at a synthesis of cultures; and c) dialogue as a way to achieve unity while preserving diversity.[2] The last option is now seen by many as the best way for cultures to interact.

This sheds light on the main problem. Dialogue and mutual understanding require common ground (S. H. Nasr).[3] Usually, justice would intuitively

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[1] Graham Fuller, *The Future of Political Islam*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, p. 74.

[2] M. Stepanyants, *Rossiya v globaliziriyishemsya mire* (*Russia in global world*) // Philosophical Journal, Moscow, 2008, n. 1. pp. 135-140.

[3] Sayyed, Hossein Nasr, *Religious and Civilizational Dialogue* // Islam 21, issue 29, June 2011.

be considered the main component of this common ground (E. Levinas).[4] Regardless of their ethnic, religious or cultural identity, people today need to order their lives in such a way that their rights and freedoms are granted maximal realization. Such a state provides for truly equitable relations between people, or equity. Therefore, in the context of globalization, implementing such a state of equity depends on developing "a certain system of human values,"[5] which is clearly rooted in a universal model of justice. But it is obvious that people perceive the universal idea of justice as a categorical imperative only when the proposed concept of justice meets the understanding of justice accepted in their culture.

This problem finds its most acute expression in the complex set of relationships between the West and the Islamic world, which has been referred to as the conflict of the Western world with the Islamic world,[6] or, in the frankly alarmist words of Samuel Huntington, as the "clash of civilizations."[7] The strained relations between the modern Western world and the Muslim East is often understood in the West as a confrontation between Christianity and Islam, and some analysts believe that this conflict threatens to escalate into war between the West and the Islamic world.

However, the attempt to develop a truly global unity in humanity on the basis of values founded in the notions of divine authority and justice, is actually a joint aspiration shared by both Islam and Christianity in their capacity as world religions.[8] In the arsenal of modern secular ideologies of culture there is no idea of divine justice as a general principle governing people's lives. Consequently, many people believe that the cause of the conflict between the West and Islam is that the Islamic concept of "divine justice"[9] is inherently violent and is underpinned by a violent principle of implementation (*tatbiq al-shari'a*).

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[4] E. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, and *Beyond Essence*. Trans. by Alphonso Lingis. Foreword (Richard A. Cohen). Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Eighth printing, 2009, p. 16.

[5] M. Stepanyants, *Polikulturnoe obrazovanie kak moderator dialoga kultur* (*Multicultural Education as Moderator for Dialogue of Cultures* // Eastern World. Philosophy: Past, Present, Future. Moscow, "Vostochnaya literature" ("Oriental Literature") Publishers, RAS, 2005, p. 354.

[6] J. L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*. Syracuse University Press, 1987, p. XV.

[7] Samuel H. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations?* // Foreign Affairs; Summer 1993, 72, 3; pp. 22-49.

[8] M. Stepanyants, *Polikulturnoe obrazovanie kak moderator dialoga kultur* (*Multicultural Education as Moderator for Dialogue of Cultures* // Eastern World. Philosophy: Past, Present, Future. M. Stepanyants. Moscow, "Vostochnaya literature" ("Oriental Literature") Publishers, RAS, 2005, p. 354.

[9] Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Conception of Justice*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, pp. 3-5.

On the Islamic side, there is a different concept of divine and human unity: Islamic theology recognizes God as the ultimate Ruler and Legislator of the community of Muslims.[10] Western ideology, however, presupposes an ontological unity of the various cultures and civilizations, and therefore takes unity of mind to be the basis for the essential unity of mankind in a globalized world, on the grounds that mind is higher than the particularities of culture, history or religion. The Muslim reaction to this approach is the perception that "Westernization" involves not just the imposition of Western standards of living and being human in different spheres of life (economic, cultural, ideological and military), but that this is actually the aggressive invasion of a godless worldview, represented by "the West."

This raises a number of questions: are Islam, based on divine justice, and secular society, based on liberal principles, compatible? Does Islam possess the internal resources to minimize the religious confrontation between the Islamic world and global society? What trends in Islam can shape the future of the Muslim community? Finally, what branch of Islam can provide support for a harmonious and peaceful interaction between civilizations?

We formulate the question in this way for the simple reason that only the Islamic world has seriously put forth an alternative to the Western imperial model of world hegemony. Islam proposes a no less hegemonic model, consisting of the transformation of the whole human community into a *dar-ul-islam*, a single Muslim community, or a single *umma*.[11] This project of the hegemony of Islamic culture is not only the obsession of a small number of religious radicals; it also fires the imaginations of numerous educated Muslim intellectuals, as well as people from different strata of Islamic society. They no longer feel themselves to be the passive victims of cultural assimilation, but rather see themselves as representatives of the civilization that will act as the "gravedigger" of the West. The very real conflicts in different parts of the Islamic world conducted by leading Western countries are seen by some Muslims as merely the inevitable trials on the way to their future victory over the historically doomed West.

These views are not confined to criticism of the Western worldview. Islamic fundamentalists also criticize openly the ideology of Muslim reformism.[12] It is common knowledge that Muslim reformers and liberals at the end of 19th and 20th centuries, unlike conservatives, believed in the possibility of a synthesis between Islamic and Western cultures, and even insisted on the

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[10] Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Conception of Justice*, p. 3.
[11] M. Stepanyants, *Rossiya v globaliziriyishemsya mire* (*Russia in a Global World*) // Philosophical Journal. Moscow, 2008, n. 1. pp. 136-137.
[12] Ahmad S. Moussalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*. American University of Beirut, 1992, pp. 151, 244.

need to follow the experience of the West in reforming and modernizing all aspects of public life; they also outlined projects and ideas to achieve this objective.[13]

Over time, Muslim reformism was itself subjected to a severe critique by Islamic "revivalism," or fundamentalism.[14] Islamic fundamentalists have claimed that the policy of secularism and reformism conducted, for example, in Turkey in the 20th century, is a dead-end. Accordingly, the fundamentalists insist on returning to the origins of Islam, espousing formulas such as: "No God but Allah" means that the only ruler is God, the only true *shari'a* (Islamic Law) is God's and the only true authority is God's."[15] Al-Mawdudi, the Muslim revivalist leader and a major 20th century Islamic thinker, described the characteristics of the Islamic state in terms of three concepts: 1. No individual or group has any role in governance (*al-hakimiyyah*) because God is the only ruler; 2. No one can legislate but God; 3. The law of the Islamic state is divine law.[16]

Islamic fundamentalists also defend the idea of the self-sufficiency of Islamic culture. The most radical proponents link the hegemony of Islamic culture to the establishment of Islamic rule throughout the world in the form of a worldwide Caliphate, or Islamic State. Islamic fundamentalism strongly rejects the spirit of religious pluralism, dismissing it as a heresy threatening the neo-absolutist claim for the dominance of political Islam throughout the world.[17] In other words, political Islam is radical Islam, with all the intolerance, fanaticism and sectarianism associated with that concept.

The recent spread of these ideas in the Muslim world is abetted by the following circumstances. The idea of the synergy or synthesis of cultures is widely perceived to be a failure, even in the Western world. The majority believe that the global fusion of cultures was an attractive idea that has turned out, on closer inspection, to be just a starry-eyed dream. So does this mean that 19th-20th century Muslim reformism was essentially an unproductive phenomenon and that the Islamic fundamentalists who claim that the Islamic world must evolve according to Divine Law (*Shari'ah*), once and forever enshrined in the Qu'ran, are right? If we recognize culture as something fixed, as a kind of monad, then yes. But such a simplistic approach to culture is too vulnerable to criticism. Culture does possess invariant charac-

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[13] J. L. Esposito. *Islam and Politics*. Syracuse University Press, 1987, pp. 57, 93.

[14] M. Stepanyants, *Traditsiya i sovremennost'* (*Tradition and Contemporaneity*) // Eastern World. Philosophy: Past, Present, Future. Moscow, "Vostochnaya literature" ("Oriental Literature") Publishers, RAS, 2005, p. 124.

[15] Ahmad S. Moussalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*. American University of Beirut, 1992, p. 151.

[16] Ibid..

[17] Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism*. University of California Press, 2002, p. XIV.

teristics, or universals, but it is also a living, self-developing organism. Professor Marietta Stepaniants is right to question the conception of culture as an unchanging static constant.[18]

In our opinion, the idea that Islamic culture, like any culture, is capable of development casts doubt on the thesis of Islamic fundamentalism that Islamic civilization is incapable of learning from other cultures due to its absolute self-sufficiency. On the contrary, it can be argued that the process of rapprochement between Islamic peoples and Western culture that began at the end of the 19th century was triggered not merely by external but also by internal factors.

As early as the mid-19th century, the violent intrusion of Western technological and scientific achievements into all spheres of life in the Islamic world forced Muslim nations to initiate direct contact with the West. In the 20th century, Turkey was the Muslim country that implemented the most radical steps towards building a secular society, where religion and state were separate. However, Turkey's secularists were motivated not just by Western models, as is contended by modern opponents of the policy of Islamic "openness" to world cultures. In fact, the project of secularization and Islamic reform in Turkey at the beginning of the 20th century had a basis in the Islamic classical heritage.

A key component of these reforms was provided by the philosophy of history outlined by Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406), the prominent late medieval Arab historian. Ibn Khaldun's doctrine denies the principle of theocracy, and the caliphate is treated by him as a secular power. Thus, Ibn Khaldun in fact claimed the primacy of natural (geographic) and economic factors over the religious factor in the development of civilizations and the emergence of states.

Later in the 20th century, in 1914, Zaki Validi Togan (1890-1970), an eminent scholar of Islam and specialist in Turkic history at Istanbul University, used Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history to write a negative account of the role of theocracy in Muslim history, particularly among the Turks, and expressed his critical attitude towards the ideology of Islamism.[19] He believed that Muslim assimilation of the achievements of Western civilization must go hand in hand with an adaptation to Western culture, for which the separation of church and state was paramount. To this end, he emphasized that the Turks have always distinguished between the Sultanate and Caliphate

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[18] M. Stepanyants, *Rossiya v globaliziriyishemsya mire* (*Russia in global world*) // Philosophical Journal. Moscow, 2008, n. 1, p. 141.

[19] Bilgi Mecmuasi, 1914, n. 7, p. 733–743 // Work cited from Zaki Validi Togan, *Tarihte usul*. Istanbul, 1985, p. 164.

(i.e. state and religion), as Ibn Khaldun himself noted in his work "The Muqaddima" (The Prolegomenon).[20]

From Zaki Validi Togan's point of view, Ibn Khaldun's original theory about the cyclical development of civilizations contains the following points: the recognition of the role of economic and geographic factors in history; the recognition of man as a social and culturally conditioned being; and the refusal to recognize the state as an entity based on religion. Based on these tenets, Zaki Validi Togan expressed the idea that support for the idea of the secularization of Islamic society can be found in the classical heritage of Islam. He concluded that the attempts of the Egyptian Muslim reformer Muhammad Abdou (1849-1905) to modernize Islam by founding it on principles of modern law were fruitless.[21] Modernizing Islam demanded a new look at its classical heritage.

It is well-known that Mustafa Kemal-Pasha (Ataturk), the first president of the Turkish Republic, carefully studied the thought of Zaki Validi Togan (1890-1970) and took it into account while carrying out his reforms in the creation and development of secularism in Turkey.

The thesis of the historicity of any culture, including Western culture, as a historically transient form of human society, is very important. This thesis justifies the claim that non-Western cultures are not fixed non-historical phenomena, destined to serve as passive objects for the "creative influence" on them of Western culture. This means that since in the past there have been close cultural links and mutual influences between Islam and the West, the relationship of these and other cultures can have a multidirectional nature in the form of a dialogue between cultures, even in a globalizing world. Moreover, in our opinion, even the doctrinal and religious tradition of Islam can be subject to this analysis; it, too, is characterized by openness, flexibility and tolerance.

Firstly, Islam presented itself through the Qu'ran as a message to all mankind, without distinction between persons according to language, color, gender or other markers. The universality of Islam lies in the fact that the Qu'ran finds the metaphysical unity and equality of human beings in the fact that they are creations of the One God. Hence the inscription of religious tolerance in Islam, something built into the system of Islamic doctrine itself (*'aqida*).

Secondly, Islamic mysticism (Sufism) was able to more fully express Islam's potential universality, and its capacity for tolerance. Al-Ghazali (d. 1111), the prominent Muslim theologian and mystic, in his "The Revival of

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[20]  Zaki Validi Togan, *Tarihte usul*, p. 163.
[21]  Bilgi Mecmuasi, 1914, n. 7, pp. 733–743 // Cf. Zaki Validi Togan, *Tarihte usul*. Istanbul, p. 164.

the Religious Sciences" (*Ihya 'Ulum al-Din*) argued that although people have different ways of worshiping God, they are all correct.[22] Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1240), one of the most prominent and influential Islamic philosophers and mystics, argued in "The Seals of Wisdom" (*Fusus al-Hikam*) that God is "everywhere, and there is nothing more than belief. This means that every human is right, and therefore deserves a reward [from the heavens]; everyone who earns this reward is happy, so everyone who is happy has been rewarded by their Lord, even if for some time he undergoes sufferings in the next world."[23] The doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi on the unity of being (*wahdat al-wujud*) insists on the essential oneness of humanity and strengthens the position of the Qu'ran on the metaphysical equality and unity of all peoples.

Thirdly, we find that the idea of the essential equivalence between the different schools of Islam, that is, a true intra-confessional tolerance, was defended even by the early Islamic theologian, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (d. 855), a leading traditionalist Islamic jurist. It is, in fact, his ideas about the need to preserve the purity of the faith that have inspired the proponents of modern Islamic fundamentalism. However, in contrast to their reading of him, in his interpretation of Islamic doctrine (*'aqida*) he writes that "we are not accusing any Muslim of lack of faith, even if they have committed grave sins."[24]

All this suggests that political Islam can only grow weaker as time passes, while cultural Islam is equipped to meet the challenges of history and grow stronger. Cultural Islam, in my definition, rests on two postulates. The first is an adherence to the principles of justice and reason. This principle, it will be noted, leaves intact the most fundamental philosophical thesis of the Qu'ran, the thesis of God as the origin of the world, a thesis which proponents of the identity of modernity and secularism sometimes assert must be denied. The early Islamic rationalist scholars, the Mu'tazilites, in fact identified God with omnipresent regularity, and harmony, and identified God with justice and reason. The second postulate of cultural Islam is the categorical imperative of doing good.

Relying on these two postulates allows representatives of the Islamic world to perceive the problem of world peace, and the problems of democracy, human rights and women's rights, as their own problems. The rise of ideas that have a universal value and the rise of universal moral imperatives that transcend a person's own culture are, in fact, only possible when persons rely on their own culture.

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[22] Al-Gazali, *Ihya 'Ulum al-Din* (*The Revival of the Religious Sciences*) (in Arabic). Beirut: Dar al-kitab al-'arabi. No date of publication, Vol. II, p. 39.

[23] Ibn 'Arabi. *Fusus al-Hikam*. Beirut: Dar al-mahadjja al-baida, 2001, p. 160.

[24] Ibn Abi Ya'la, *Tabaqat al-hanabila*. Riyadh, 1999, Vol. I, p. 350.

It is hardly possible to reduce the moral responsibility of a person to the "radical challenge" described by Sartre. A specific person's sense of moral responsibility is always intertwined with the larger world of that person's family, parents, and the historical fate of their people. When that context is taken into account, Sartre's paradox becomes impossible to formulate. Sartre gives an example in his *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme* of a young man who is torn between remaining with his ailing mother and going off to join the Resistance. (Charles Taylor has analyzed this paradox in some detail.[25]) But the answer is that a son will take part in the Resistance with the blessing of his sick mother, for his mother's understanding of moral responsibility also includes a sense of being tied to the fate of her's and her son's people.

A counter-question is possible: is it not political Islam that is the only truly effective force that is able to defend the interests of the Muslims? There are several reasons why such a question must be answered in the negative.

Political Islam affirms the priority of the interests of the Muslim community over the interests of a particular Muslim.[26] Under the guise of "protecting the interests of the Muslim community, or nation" it is possible to promote the interests of a particular Muslim country to the detriment of the national interests of other Muslim countries, and the corporate interests of a particular Islamic organization. In this sense, political Islam can serve as a conduit of narrow corporate interests, and the political elite of great nations can make their own and other nations hostages to grand projects aimed at restoring the "world order."

In these Islamic global "projects" (such as a worldwide Caliphate, or worldwide Islamic State) there is no historical perspective, because they are utopian projects. This also applies to the project of Islamic fundamentalism to return to the origins of Islam, the Qu'ran and the Sunna (teachings and practices of Muhammad). Its main theoretical drawback is the false premise of the self-sufficiency (autarky) of the Islamic world. Globalization will force, and already is forcing, the Islamic world to open up to the rest of the world. "The Arab Spring" of 2011 proved that what the Arab world wants is not religious revenge, not chimeras such as a global Islamic Caliphate, but democratic changes in social and economic development, and the emancipation of the individual. This proves that in fact the Muslim world is consistently moving in the direction of secularism and secular society,[27] as long as the

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[25] Charles Taylor, *Responsibility for Self // The Identities of Persons*, ed. by A. O. Rorty. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976, pp. 111-126.

[26] Ahmad S. Moussalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism*. American University of Beirut, 1992, pp. 151, 243. Quintan Wiktorovicz, *Radical Islam Rising*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005, p. 208.

[27] Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984, p. 198.

peoples of the Arab countries are primarily concerned with social rather than religious issues.

In many countries, for example, Russia, Muslims are the bearers of a secular culture and education, and no one will be able to bring them back to the Middle Ages. The basis of their socio-cultural knowledge is secular knowledge which they encounter first as children, and later in school and higher education establishments. These Muslims turn to Islam as a means of religious self-identification at an older age. In other words, they accept Islam as part of the historical past of their people, as part of national culture, as a historical form of the existence of moral standards of their people. Islam for many Muslims is not an ideology in the strict sense; hardly any of them take seriously the Qu'ranic stories of hell and heaven in all their detail. Most of them accept the modern scientific world picture, and trying to impose on them a pre-medieval religious world view is ridiculous. These are all major factors that contribute to the weakening of political Islam and the increased influence of cultural Islam.

This constitutes an additional argument for critics of Samuel Huntington's theory about the clash of Western civilization and the Islamic world. This rests on the controversial thesis about the decisive role of religion in society. He supports a similarly monistic view of history to the Marxists. The only difference is that the proponents of historical materialism insist on the critical role of economic factors in history, and Huntington emphasizes the role of religion in the relations between civilizations. He does not take into consideration that among the main reasons for the growth in the region of Islamic fundamentalism and radical Islam in recent decades is the military invasion by Western countries of Iraq and Afghanistan, and support for such actions by the U.S. and its allied authoritarian regimes in the Arab countries. Western countries' pursuit of such policies only slows the spread of democratic institutions in the Islamic world.

The perception of the Muslim community as a single, one-dimensional community, whose interests are above the national interests of particular Muslim nations is a simplification, a distorted perception of reality. The Muslim community, or nation (*umma*), is an element of an ideological system, an ideological phenomenon, which is manipulated by the ideologists of the political elite of major Muslim ethnic groups, and by Western experts like Huntington. In fact, the West is not dealing with a single Muslim community, but with specific Muslim nations, and it influences not only purely religious interests, but also the national (political, social, economic) interests of those nations. The religious factor is just one of many aspects of a complex set of contradictions between the West and the Islamic world.

There is a stereotype that the Islamic factor has much more impact in the Muslim world than the national factor. This is a common mistake. It is not only the great nations that have national interests. The national interests of Muslim peoples, like other peoples, arise due their vital needs and requirements, which are satisfied through competition for land, water and other resources. As soon as their territories fell within the scope of the interests of imperial nations (Western countries, Russia, China), and foreign companies, the mobility of these people increased, and the objective grounds for ethnic nationalism were formed.

Massive movements in Arab countries (Egypt, Tunisia, etc.) in 2010-2011 (the so-called "Arab Spring") confirmed that Islam is an important, but not the only or the main, factor in the identity of Muslim nations. The Islamic world is not opposed to the West as a single entity, one-dimensional and hostile. The World of Islam consists of many nations, each of which has its own national interests.

The role of intellectuals in the dialogue of cultures is also not straight forward. Intellectuals (philosophers, writers, etc.) are often powerless to influence directly the complex relationship between the West and the Islamic world and the relationships between different cultures in general. One person is unable to bear the burden of responsibility for all humanity. Moreover, it is difficult to distinguish clearly between the consequences of the actions of intellectuals and the consequences of the actions of other people, as Paul Ricœur describes.[28] But then who can really become the subjects of intercultural dialogue? In our opinion, the real subjects of the dialogue of cultures are the people themselves, such as the Afghan people who resisted the Soviet invasion,[29] or the people of Egypt, who overthrew the authoritarian regime of Hosni Mubarak. This is the way, slowly, and incrementally, that the foundations for democracy and civil society are formed in non-Western countries. Consequently, the decisive factor in finding a mutual understanding and dialogue between cultures is the struggle of peoples for their real interests. The task of intellectuals is to articulate those interests.

Under these conditions, cultural Islam as an alternative to political Islam in fact means the following. Islam can respond to the challenges of the modern era, if Islam is able to offer itself as a cultural Islam. I do not agree with the thesis of Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations. Islam as a culture has never opposed the West; on the contrary, Islam in its heyday was a part of Western civilization, the civilization of the Mediterranean basin.
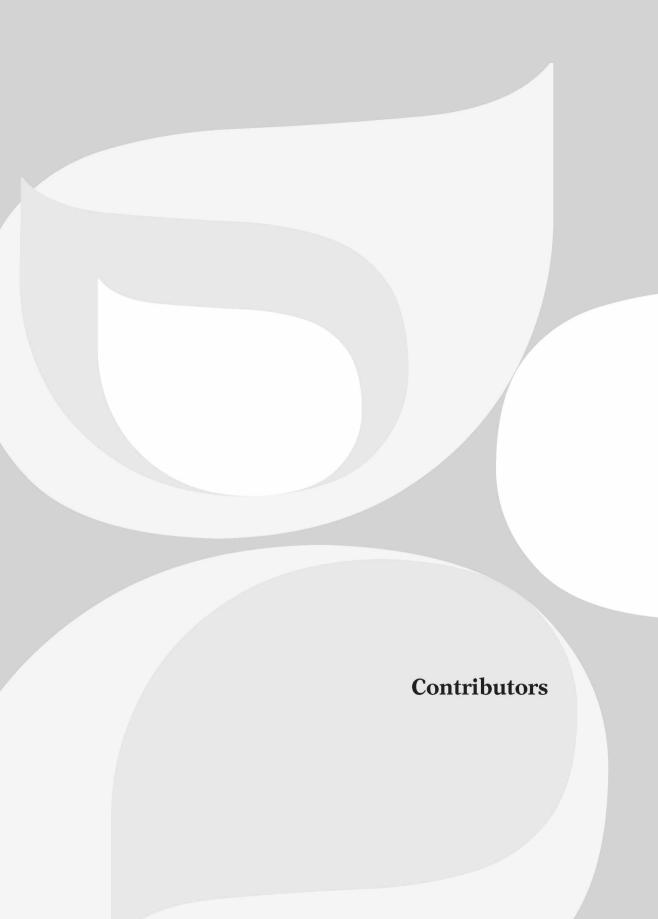
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[28] Paul Ricœur, *The Just*. Trans. by David Pellauer. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2000, p. 30.

[29] Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*. Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 234.

I agree with the view of the eminent Turkologist and orientalist, Dr. Zaki Validi Togan (1890-1970), that the Islamic East belongs to the eastern world only in the purely geographical sense, and that in fact, as it manifests itself in different civilizations, the Islamic East is actually a part of Western civilization, merely differing from it as a culture. The unity of the Islamic world with the classical civilizations of antiquity is demonstrated in numerous ways: in the Sumerian measures of weight and currency such as the dinar, the dirham, the miskal, the *Khorezmian dina kram* (gram); in the use of Seleucid chronology and the mention of Alexander of Macedon in the Qur'an as a prophet of the monotheistic religions; and so on. Islamic culture was formed as part of a common Mediterranean civilization. Islamic civilization is heir to the civilization of antiquity. Islamic culture managed to preserve and increase the cultural, scientific and philosophical traditions of antiquity. And in the 9th-11th centuries, Islamic culture began to determine the level of the world's material and spiritual culture.

In sum, there is no insurmountable wall between the West and the Islamic world in principle. The West and the Islamic world are two hypostases, two different incarnations of a single Mediterranean civilization. They are united by a common civilizational heritage and a common religious tradition, the Abrahamic tradition. Historically, the difference between them arose due to the economic decline of the Islamic world. However, the difference between the Islamic East and the West will remain for some time yet, but it should be viewed not as a substantial difference but precisely as a transitory, contingent one.

Today, the economic and cultural development of Islamic countries should bring the Islamic world and the West ever closer. Globalization will force the Islamic world to join the common global space. Muslims have to join Western nations in social and economic competition. For Muslims today, the fight for rights is not a religious, but a national economic issue, and should not be limited to conducting ritual prayers in the major metropolitan cities of the West, or in offices and military units. Muslims must work together with the leading nations of the world (the West, Russia, China, India) and jointly participate in economic and cultural competition in various sectors (manufacturing, science, IT technologies, etc.). The Islamic world needs radical social change, and the establishment of modern institutions to carry out fundamental breakthroughs in science, education and the economy. These transformations are certainly possible: after all, in its "golden period" in the 11-12th centuries, Islamic civilization determined the level of the world's material and spiritual culture and so surely has the capacity to take up a leading role again today – as long as the nature and mission of Islam is rightly conceived.

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