
Islamic Studies In America

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

University Professor of Islamic Studies

The name of Islam appears in the news nearly every day and several million Muslims constitute an element of American society which can no longer be ignored. The thought of Islamic philosophers and the contribution of Islamic scientists is embedded in one way or another in the background of the philosophy and science being cultivated in the Western world including America; and words of Arabic and Persian origin are used in American English more than are Japanese, Chinese or Hindi words. The adobe architecture of the American Southwest reflects clearly its Islamic influence through both its forms and its building techniques as well as the word adobe itself; and the poetry of the Islamic peoples is read and the music heard to an ever greater degree in this land. Yet, despite all these and many other similar facts, the state of Islamic studies in America is far from satisfactory.

In this essay, which is confined to Islamic studies in American colleges and universities, we wish to consider some of the factors which prevent Islamic studies from occupying the position one would expect for a field which embraces the culture and history of a billion people stretching across the Afro-Asian land mass with important extensions into Europe and now to an ever greater degree the Americas. One must ask why it is that whole areas of the Islamic world such as Southeast Asia fail even to be considered in most centers of Islamic studies; and why, despite so

many universities where Islamic studies is taught, America has produced so few outstanding scholars in this field who can be compared to such European Islamicists as Louis Massignon, Sir Hamilton Gibb or Henry Corbin. One must of course also ask why much of the fruit of scholarship in Islamic studies in America is so strongly opposed by Muslims despite the attempt by a number of American scholars to cultivate a more sympathetic view of Islam than that which was developed by classical European orientalism.

Some of the causes for the existing state of affairs are related to the history of the development of Islamic studies as a discipline in this country. The early American scholars of Islam were mostly missionaries with an often open and vocal opposition to Islam. A number of the early scholars, however, came from the background of Rabbinical studies and since they belonged to the era preceding the partition of Palestine in 1948, did not feel the need to produce the polarized and "motivated" scholarship associated with Zionism which has affected Islamic studies so greatly since the decade of the 50s. There appeared among them, therefore, some outstanding figures who contributed greatly to Islamic studies, such scholars as Harry A. Wolfson, who although primarily a scholar of Jewish thought, made notable contributions to the history of Islamic theology (*Kalam*) and philosophy. Among the pioneers of Islamic studies there were also a number of Maronites like Phillip Hitti, who while being outstanding scholars of Arabic, were not Muslims although they were seen by many in America as authentic voices of Islamic scholarship since most people almost naturally equated Muslim and Arab. Many of these early scholars, however, had little love for the specifically Islamic dimension of the subject which they were studying although they helped to advance the cause of Arabic studies.

Despite the appearance of a number of scholars of distinction, there existed from the beginning a trait in Islamic studies in America which distinguished it from let us say Chinese, Japanese or Indian studies, this trait being an opposition to or even disdain for Islam and its culture among many scholars in this field.

Usually when an American went into the field of Far Eastern studies, a few missionaries being the exception, he was attracted by some aspect of that civilization or religion which he loved and defended as can be seen by the attitude of Langdon Warner of Harvard University, who played such an important role in saving Kyoto from being bombed during the Second World War. This attitude of love and empathy has manifested itself much less frequently in Islamic studies, not that of course it was or is totally absent.

After the Second World War with America entering the international scene in an active way, a new phase opened in the history of Islamic studies which caused the field to expand but at the expense of depth and concern for the historical and religious dimension. Centers of regional studies began to be developed in many universities throughout the country from Harvard to UCLA, usually under the name of Middle Eastern but also occasionally Near Eastern studies. Oriented mostly toward the present day period and based upon the social sciences rather than theology, religion or the humanities, these centers taught many subjects concerning the Islamic world but with the minimum of reference to Islam itself. A whole generation of scholars was trained, some of whom became decision makers in America, who affected the history of the Islamic world itself, usually in an adverse manner, while the majority became experts and scholars of the central regions of the Islamic world. With a number of notable exceptions, however, few of these scholars made any outstanding contributions to Islamic studies or could predict any of the major transformations which came about in the region of their specialization, transformations such as the revival of Islam in various forms in the decade of the 70s. It is only the events of the past ten years in the Islamic world that have forced many of these centers to pay more attention to Islam in the Middle East.

Even to this day, however, in many of the major centers of Middle Eastern studies everything is taught seriously except Islam itself. One sees often in such centers numerous courses on

history, anthropology, languages, sociology, political science, and similar subjects pertaining to the Islamic world but little study in-depth of Islam as the religion which forms the heart and arteries of the body of the society and civilization being considered.

There are in fact in America only a handful of institutions of higher learning like the University of Chicago and Temple University where Islam is studied seriously in the religion department as religion and not as something else. Moreover, despite the rapid expansion of religious studies in this continent during the past four decades to include "non-Western" religions and the establishment of centers for the study of religion on a worldwide scale such as those at Harvard, Colgate and Claremont, Islam has not at all fared as well as Hinduism, Buddhism or the Chinese religions. The discipline of comparative religion in fact has produced very few Islamicists of note. Besides the historical opposition to Islam in the Christian West, going back to the Crusades and the Reconquest in Spain, which affects almost unconsciously the attitude of many modern Westerners including those who do not even consider themselves to be Christian, there is the question of the way religious studies have evolved.

During the 19th century, there developed in the field of "the science of religions," or *Religionswissenschaft*, the idea of the evolution of religion from so-called "primitive" to higher forms, reaching its peak with Christianity. Such a conception of religious history, which continued into this century, obviously had great difficulty coming to terms with such a major postscript as Islam. As a reaction to this historicism, there developed the school of phenomenology which had its most influential representative in America in the person of M. Eliade, who himself made major contributions to nearly every field of religious studies except Islam. With its emphasis upon myths and symbols, this school was much more attracted to such traditions as Hinduism, whose truths are for the most part expressed in mythological language, than to Islam, whose metaphysical and theological teachings are

couched mostly in an "abstract" language and whose teachings include a Sacred Law which is central to the understanding of the religion.

To these factors were added the age-old distortions of Islam as the "religion of the sword" or the "dry" religion of the desert, whose blindingly clear spirituality was supposedly somehow borrowed from foreign sources and grafted upon the body of Islam. As a result, while in teaching Hinduism, usually such sublime texts as the *Baghadavad-Gita* were taught and not laws of inheritance in various castes and sub-castes, and Hindu art rather than social and commercial conflicts. In the case of Islam only the most external aspects of the religion came to be taught along with a distorted history of a religion seen in constant conflict and war.

The result of all these factors has been that Islamic studies has not fared well as religious studies even when compared to Hindu, Buddhist or Chinese religious studies, despite or perhaps because of the fact that Islam is theologically much closer to Judaism and Christianity and that Islam has shared so much more common history with the Christian West than the Indian and Far Eastern religions. It is interesting to note that the incredible synthesis created in Muslim Spain, and the culture in which under Muslim rule, Muslims, Jews and Christian lived at peace for several centuries, contributing to a glittering civilization in which they all played a role, is passed over more or less in silence. Almost no one refers to the Judeo/Christian/Islamic tradition, but on the contrary, in forgetfulness of the reality of Abrahamism monotheism and to abet the cause of passing political goals, most scholars juxtapose the Judeo-Christian heritage to the Islamic.

Not only has Islamic studies fared by and large poorly in the field of religion, it has been also more or less neglected in the field of the humanities. Whether it be in philosophy or history, literature or the arts, Islamic studies in America has not succeeded in flowering in any notable manner in comparison with let us say Japanese studies. Not only in medieval European

universities did the Islamic humanities play a greater role than they do today in America, but even during the Romantic movement in England and Germany there was greater interest at least in the literature of the Islamic peoples than one finds today.

It is only in the field of the social sciences that Islamic studies or rather subjects related to the Islamic world have been treated fairly extensively in America. Here, however, there stands the major question of whether Western models apply to the Islamic world. Is it possible to study Islamic society on the basis of the theories of Durkheim or to carry out an anthropological study of a part of the Islamic world on the basis of the theories of Levi-Strauss? These are major questions which are now being debated, and one hopes that as a result more serious contributions will be made to Islamic studies in those fields which in the West are called the social sciences. Until that is done, however, even in this domain where so much effort is being spent, the results will usually not have much to do with the social and religious reality of the Islamic world.

As for law which plays such an important role in Islam, it is only during the past decade that certain American law schools have begun to teach Islamic Law, and that mostly for practical reasons. The teaching of the Divine Law, or *Shari'ah*, however, has not become part and parcel of Islamic studies and few American scholars have made notable contributions to this field.

At the heart of Islamic studies stands not only the religion of Islam, but also the languages involved with the study of that religion and the civilization it brought into being. Arabic is the most important of Islamic languages and has been taught in America since the 18th century. In recent decades, however, despite the appearance of several eminent Arabists who either themselves or their families migrated from the Islamic world such as George Makdisi and Irfan Shahid and the appearance of a number of fine American Arabists such as James Bellamy, William Brenner, Victor Danner, Richard Frank and Nicholas

Heer, the teaching of Arabic has still suffered as far as Islamic studies is concerned. The main reason has been the emphasis upon "modern" Arabic at the expense of the classical language. Until recently in most centers of Arabic studies, Quranic Arabic was made subservient to the prose of al-Ahram and little attention was paid to the fact that among literate Arabs themselves, the Quran is read and understood first, and only later is modern literary Arabic mastered. During the past decade some changes have been made in the direction of classical Arabic and more students are now being trained who can read classical texts. Still, the training is far from complete because too few students even with advanced degrees are actually able to read classical Arabic texts with full in-depth comprehension of their meaning.

The situation of the second major Islamic language, Persian, is much more deplorable. First of all, even the name of the language is now used incorrectly, it frequently being called *Farsi* as if in English one called French *Francais* or German *Deutsch*. Secondly, it is usually forgotten that not only is Persian (by whatever name it is called) still the spoken and written language of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan as well as that of many people in Iraq, the Persian Gulf and Pakistan, but that for a thousand years it was the *lingua franca* of Asia. Quranic commentaries in China were written in Persian while even after the Second World War just before Albania became Communist, Persian books continued to be printed in this Western outpost of the Islamic world. Without knowledge of Persian, the Muslim culture of India and most of its medieval history, both Hindu and Muslim, is a closed book, and later Islamic thought as it developed in the eastern lands of Islam a forbidden territory. The remarkable indifference to the teaching of Persian in many American universities has done much to weaken Islamic studies and to prevent well-rounded students from being trained. Persian is essential not only for the study of eastern history, literature and the arts, but also for Islamic studies itself where some of the most important figures such as Ghazzali wrote in both Arabic and Persian.

The other major Islamic languages such as Turkish, Urdu, Bengali and Malay are taught here and there but rarely as an integral part of Islamic studies. This is partly due to an unfortunate classification of religions which is detrimental to Islamic studies, the division in question being the one between Eastern religions and Western religions. In many universities Islam is taught as a Western religion despite being "non-Western." This is correct to the extent that Islam is an integral part of Abrahamic monotheism of which Judaism and Christianity are the other two branches. But whereas these branches were to grow primarily in the West, Islam was destined to spread as much in the East as the West. There are more Muslims in Southeast Asia today than in the whole of the Arab world. The religious life and culture of several hundred million Muslims in South Asia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and China is hardly ever mentioned in general courses on Islam and not even known to any appreciable degree by advanced students in the field.

Likewise, African Islam is rarely treated as part of Islamic studies. General courses on Islam and its history deal only accidentally and tangentially with Africa south of the Sahara, and courses on Africa rarely relate the advent and history of Islam in Africa to the rest of the Islamic world. It is possible to attain the highest degree in Islamic studies and not know anything about either the great Islamic empires of Mali nor of the millions of Muslims living in Xinjiang (Sinkiang). A work such as the *Venture of Islam* by Marshall Hodgson, who was one of the most gifted American scholars of Islam, covers the whole of the Islamic world in time as well as geographically in a manner that is quite exceptional and far from the usual treatment that is given to the subject.

The criticism made of Islamic studies in America does not mean to detract from the achievements made in this domain by a number of American scholars in so many fields such as Islamic history, anthropology, sociology, the history of art and archaeology,

music, literature, philosophy, the history of science and several aspects of the religion of Islam itself. But considering the importance of the subject, the existing distortions and the high price in terms of practical matters which the Islamic world itself as well as America have paid and continue to pay as a result of the misunderstanding of Islam and the Islamic world in America, it is necessary to investigate means whereby the situation can be improved. It must, therefore, be asked what can be done to improve the condition of Islamic studies while benefitting from the achievements of the past few decades and learning from its mistakes. This question must, moreover, be asked in light of the fact that Islamic studies in America involves to an even greater degree the Islamic world itself as a result of the presence of a large number of Muslim students in America as well as a number of Muslim scholars and teachers whose works have an extensive influence not only upon these students but also within Islamic countries.

The first and most important step which must be taken in Islamic studies is to study this field within the framework of religion rather than a discipline, which no matter how significant in itself, is not concerned with religion as such. As already mentioned, in the vast majority of institutions of learning in America, Islam is studied as history, language, culture, a political system and the like but not as religion. The heart of Islamic studies must be moved from all these other disciplines or regional centers and placed in religion departments where the central, religious significance of all things Islamic can be brought out. In the Islamic world not only theology and ethics, but also law, economics and politics, not to speak of the arts and sciences, possess a much greater religious significance than their counterparts in post-medieval European civilization. There is no greater source of distortion than applying the secularist perspective of the past few centuries in the West to a religion and civilization where it does not apply. The activity in the bazaar of a Muslim city is economic activity but it is not just economic

activity. It possesses a religious dimension which is crucial to its understanding and without which any study of it will be superficial, to say the least.

In stating that Islamic studies should be placed in religion departments, however, it is not meant that the contemporary Western religious categories should be applied blindly to Islam. For example, in Christianity theology is much more central to Islam, whereas in Islam law is more central. In Christianity mysticism was never organized into orders independent of the authority of the Church whereas in Islam Sufi orders have always been independent of the exoteric "*ulama*." In fact the whole question of religious authority is posed in a different way in the two traditions. There is need to make use of a theology and in fact metaphysics of comparative religion which is able to deal with Islam in a manner that does justice to the nature of that tradition and yet is comprehensible to the Western world view. The prejudices which have marred the study of Islam in the West since the time of Peter the Venerable, when the Quran was first rendered into Latin and even before that important event, must finally be overcome if understanding in-depth is to be achieved. Unfortunately, despite so much claim to objectivity, much of Western scholarship concerning Islam remains distorted as a result of many old prejudices to which new ones resulting from the Arab-Israeli conflict and the rise of so-called fundamentalism have been added.

Despite this fact, however, Islam must be first and foremost studied as a religion and not simply a social force or historical event. This task is made easier by the appearance of a number of works in European languages during the past few decades which speak with both sympathy and authority about Islam. Most of these works have been written by Westerners who have developed understanding of the Islamic tradition or who speak from within that tradition. But also a number of books in this category of writings have been written by Muslims themselves but in

European languages, primarily English and French. Although some of these works do not address the Western mind and the questions usually posed by a Westerner in quest of understanding Islam, others do succeed in creating a bridge between the Islamic world and the West. In any case the in-depth, thorough and sympathetic yet objective study of the Islamic religion and the placing of this study at the heart of Islamic studies is a necessary task which is already facilitated by the research, study and writings of those Western and Muslim scholars who speak with the voice of authority in such a manner that they are accepted by Muslims themselves and at the same time are comprehensible to the Western audience.

There is under present circumstances in any case no excuse for the large number of Middle Eastern, Near Eastern or Islamic studies programs in which Islam is relegated to a single introductory course and everything else Islamic, whether it be history, art, sociology or economics is taught in almost complete detachment from the Islamic tradition which in reality is the lifeblood of all those other domains. Nor is there any excuse for the remarkably weak representation of Islam in so many comparative religious studies programs throughout the country where there are often several professors in Hindu, Buddhist and Far Eastern religious studies but hardly anyone in Islam. Of all the major religions of the worlds, Islam fares worst in most religious studies programs in America. Until that weakness is solved, there is little hope for a serious improvement in the situation of Islamic studies.

Once Islamic studies is constituted in such a manner that at its heart stands the religion and its study, then it is possible and even necessary to relate this central concern to a number of fields such as sociology, economics, international relations, political science as well as the humanities for those students who wish to have such an interdisciplinary education. This is particularly true of Muslim students coming to America for advanced education. To an ever

greater degree such students are interested in studying not only economics, sociology, anthropology or for that matter the history of art or the history of science. They are primarily interested in Islam in relation to those fields. In light of the present day interest within the Islamic world in the process that has become known as "the Islamization of knowledge," this type of interdisciplinary approach could become one of the most fruitful developments in Islamic studies in America with far-reaching consequences for the Islamic world itself. But the condition of success in this program remains a carefully prepared core Islamic studies program grounded in religious studies.

The second important consideration in improving Islamic studies is the proper teaching of the Islamic languages. As far as Arabic is concerned, fortunately much attention is being paid to the subject but still not enough to classical Arabic. As already stated, emphasis should be placed upon classical Arabic which must serve as the basis for modern Arabic and not vice versa. Also, greater attention should be paid to the reading of classical texts and being able to interpret these texts according to the traditional methods of hermeneutics. Earlier orientalism, despite its numerous prejudices, rendered much service to Islamic studies by editing critically many important texts. Even this art, however, is being lost especially in America where so many young scholars prefer to write about texts without being able to read them carefully, not to speak of editing them. The fault in this matter lies most of all in the manner in which Arabic is taught.

As for Persian, the whole philosophy of teaching it must be changed. Persian must first of all be recognized for what it is, namely as already mentioned the *lingua franca* of what Toynbee called the Iranic zone of Islamic civilization stretching from Iraq to China. After Arabic, Persian is the most important Islamic language and the only language other than Arabic which became global within Islamic civilization. No program of Islamic studies can be serious without the teaching of Persian. Semitic philology

is one thing and Islamic studies another. Arabic is of course very important for Semitic linguistic studies where it is studied along with Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac and other Semitic languages. But this relationship has little to do with the relationship of Arabic to Persian and through Persian to other major Islamic languages such as Turkish and Urdu. Islamic studies, in contrast to Semitic studies, must emphasize this latter relationship and teach both Arabic and Persian to students seriously interested in Islamic studies especially as far as Islamic thought is concerned.

As for the other Islamic languages, they must also be offered in major centers while a number of centers will naturally specialize in a particular region of the Islamic world such as North Africa, South Asia or Southeast Asia in which case, Berber, the Indian language or Malay must be taught. But the role of such languages and even such a major language as Turkish is that of a vernacular language while Arabic and Persian constitute the classical and universal languages of the Islamic world. These languages, because of their immense richness and long history, must be mastered in depth and on the basis of a program which would enable at least a small number of students to gain full mastery of them. American institutions of learning have not until now been as successful in this endeavor as the amount of effort spent would lead one to expect. There has, however, been more success in the field of Arabic than Persian where there are very few American scholars who possess complete mastery over the classical literature. But the flowering of Islamic studies requires a deepening of language teaching in such a manner that at least a number of young scholars are trained every year who can read and translate with precision the texts with which Islamic studies is concerned.

As for different aspects of Islamic studies, the situation varies from one field to another. In history a number of gifted young scholars have been trained, but there is a shortage of competent scholars in the field to the extent that many of the works written

around the turn of the century continue to be reprinted and taught despite many important new discoveries which have been made since they were written. It is necessary to encourage a greater number of students with a real flair for history to turn to the subject of Islamic history by emphasizing not only the significance of the field itself, but also its relation to other major fields of history such as medieval European history, Indian history and the like.

In the field of philosophy, Islamic studies in America suffers particularly from the fact that the prevalent philosophical trend in America since the Second World War is particularly opposed to the religious and metaphysical concerns of Islamic philosophy. This fact, added to the lack of attention paid to the study of philosophy in secondary schools, has prevented Islamic philosophy from attracting as many gifted students as one finds in Europe. There are very few centers in America, even major ones, where Islamic philosophy is taught seriously, and where it is, rarely is it related to the Islamic tradition to which it is inalienably linked.

The situation of Islamic science is not much better. There are a small number of fine scholars in the field teaching in several centers but in most cases the study of Islamic science is cut off from the rest of Islamic studies and taught more as a chapter in the history of Western science. Rarely in fact are the Islamic sciences seen as the fruit of the tree of Islamic civilization, nurtured and developed within a world view which has its roots in the Islamic tradition.

The field of Islamic art, however, has come into its own during the past decade and there is a greater degree of interest in both Islamic art and architecture than even before. The Aga Khan program in Islamic art and architecture at Harvard and M.I.T. has been in its own way a catalyst in this domain and has caused a number of young Muslim architects, urban designers and the like to come to America to pursue their studies in Islamic art and

architecture. This very active domain of Islamic studies can be further developed by strengthening its link with the study of Islam itself and not losing sight of the nexus between Islamic art and the religion which made the creation of this art possible.

The non-plastic arts, however, have not fared as well. The literature of the Islamic peoples has attracted a number of scholars and a few like Herbert Mason have created literary works based on Islamic themes. But the situation is very far from that of Persian literature in Victorian and Edwardian England. There is need of studying anew the great masterpieces of Islamic literature, particularly Sufi poetry. Classical Persian Sufi poetry remains to this day a subject which attracts many who are drawn to mystical and spiritual subjects. Much more needs to be done along the line of works by A.M. Schimmel, William Chittick, Omar Pound and others to make this poetry as well as the literary masterpieces of Arabic, Turkish, Urdu and other Islamic languages known and made part and parcel of Islamic studies.

As for the social sciences in relation to Islam, the works of American scholars are numerous and American centers remain very active in various social sciences such as sociology, anthropology, political sciences and more recently economics. In some fields such as anthropology American scholars such as Clifford Geertz have produced works of great influence. But by and large these fields suffer from the imposition of alien models upon the Islamic world with often catastrophic results as witnessed by the predictions made by so many American political scientists concerning the Islamic world during the past few decades. These disciplines need to sink their roots more in the Islamic religion, its theology and philosophy, its Sacred Law and the politico-social and economic teachings which issue from it and the history and culture of the Islamic peoples. Today in most American centers of Islamic studies, Western social, economic or political models are used for the study of the Islamic world and there is little interaction between the social sciences and Islamic studies. The walls drawn around each discipline are so high and

thick that it is difficult to either mount them or pierce through them. If Islamic studies is to be strengthened in this domain, there is no choice but to remove some of these obstacles; otherwise studies whose results are usually contradicted by events will remain the order of the day.

It must be added that in order for Islamic studies to flourish in America to the benefit of both America and the Islamic world, it should also be taught as part and parcel of the general education and liberal arts programs in American universities. The experience of Muslim Spain where Christians and Jews lived in harmony with Muslims and where all the communities interacted and collaborated with each other to create one of the most glorious episodes of human history must be recalled and studied carefully rather than purposefully forgotten because of current political or ideological interests. The Western humanities must be taught as related both historically and morphologically to those of Islam. It is not sufficient to simply mention the "Arab philosophers" in an intermediate chapter linking late antiquity to the scholastics in the history of philosophy. The Muslim philosophers must be taught fully not only as one of the pillars of the foundation of medieval Western thought, but also as philosophers who while sharing the same Graeco-Hellenistic intellectual heritage and Abrahamitic religious background as Western philosophers, developed their thought in a direction different from that of the post-medieval West. Islamic philosophy must be seen as not only a chapter in the history of Western thought, but also an independent school of philosophy close to yet different from Western philosophy and having its own history which continues to the present day. Islamic philosophy, moreover, should be taught in philosophy departments as philosophy and not only in Middle East departments where neither the teachers nor the students are necessarily trained to understand philosophical discourse.

The same could be said for other disciplines. Islamic literature should be taught not only to students specializing in Islamic studies, but to all students of world literature who should see

Arabic literature in relation to Provencal poetry, to the *Divine Comedy* of Dante, to the treatises of Raymond Lull, to the introduction of rhyme into European poetry, to the *Fables of La Fontaine*. They should read Persian poetry along with their study of Goethe and Ruckert or English romantic poetry or the American Transcendentalists and come to understand something of the significance of the influence of the literature of these languages upon the European literary tradition. They should also study the literature of the Islamic peoples as literature.

In music the origin of many European instruments should be made clear as should the interaction between Spanish and Arabic music. The introduction of the Turkish military bands not to speak of works of Mozart and Haydn with purported Turkish themes should be combined with familiarity with some Turkish music and even in modern times the study of Bartok and Kodaly should be accompanied by some acquaintance with Arabic and other forms of music of the Muslim peoples in which they were so interested.

As for art, rarely is the history of Western art taught with reference to the significance of the Cordova mosque for medieval Gothic arching or Arabic illuminations for the art of illumination or for that matter the Persian miniature for certain aspects of the art of Matisse. Without denying the very different nature of European art from Islamic art, various forms of Islamic art, which over the centuries have fecundated or influenced European or American art, can be taught as a part of those subjects in the same way that Greek or Roman influences, which were of course influential on a much wider scale, are studied. Although Islam was not simply the foundation of Western civilization as was Rome once Christianized, it was one of the elements which played a great role in the formative period of Western civilization. Islamic studies should therefore be taught in the light of that role as well as independently of Western studies.

Finally, it must be mentioned that every intellectual endeavor flowers and develops through the quality of the thought of those who lead and not through the quantity of those who happen to study in the particular field in question. Islamic studies is no exception. In American centers until now there has not been in general enough emphasis upon a hierarchical concept of a program which would begin with many students and end with very few who would, however, be highly qualified. There is a tendency to offer too many courses which move in a parallel and horizontal direction rather than a vertical one. Too much emphasis is placed upon the quantity of teachers and students as if the greatest Islamicists that the West has produced were not products of universities where one or two outstanding scholars trained a very small number of gifted students over the years in a manner which did not simply widen their horizon but also deepened their scholarship and enabled them to penetrate more profoundly into the subject with which they were dealing. No excellence in Islamic studies, or for that matter practically any other field of intellectual endeavor, is possible without emphasis upon quality and hierarchy in the sense of building an ever higher intellectual edifice on a firm and broad foundation and not only expanding the foundation horizontally.

The future of Islamic studies in America is not only a matter of theoretical or academic concern. Upon the knowledge or ignorance of the Islamic world in America depends the future of both the Islamic world and America. The incredible distortions of the image of Islam in the American mass media complements the lack of understanding of many facets of Islam by the "experts" upon whose views depend the decisions which affect the life of millions of human beings. The Islamic world is too large and Islam too strong a force to be relegated to the status it possesses in the West and especially America today. The development of Islamic studies upon a more solid foundation, with greater depth and on the basis of more vigorous scholarship and intellectual honesty, cannot but be of the greatest benefit to both America and the Islamic world.

The destinies of the Islamic world and the West are intertwined in such a way that ignorance of one world by the other cannot but result in calamitous results for both worlds. It is hoped that the bitter fruits of the past decade will help usher in a period in which Islamic studies can both provide a greater understanding of that world and enrich to the extent possible the religious, cultural, artistic and educational life of America itself.

Science and the Forces of Change

Richard H. Schlager
Elton Professor of Philosophy

When future historians look back at the marked contrast between the condition of man at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, the transformation that occurred during the intervening one hundred years surely will be considered one of the greatest periods of change in the history of mankind. Despite the tendency to exaggerate the unique importance of one's own epoch, the evidence for the twentieth century's being a watershed in human history is overwhelming.

Several years ago I visited a French château built in the latter half of the nineteenth century. A lovely edifice, it contained a panelled library filled with leatherbound books, a beautiful chapel illuminated by brightly figured vitraux, a spacious dining room and ballroom with magnificently sculptured fireplaces and ornate mirrors, along with a foyer from which a graceful marble staircase and carved balustrade arched above. On the second level, a seemingly endless series of chambers created a trompe l'oeil of infinite perspective. The luxurious furnishings included oriental rugs covering the herringbone pattern of glistening oak, large tapestries depicting various mythological or historical scenes, exquisite furniture covered with rich fabrics, glittering chandeliers lighted by candles--plus modern plumbing and bathroom amenities. But aside from the latter, what was most striking was the fact that the mode of life reflected in this setting was unchanged from past centuries or even millennia. No central

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Richard A. Kenney
Seyyed H. Nasr
Richard H. Schlager
David E. Seidelson
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Alex Zwerdling

Roderick S. French, Editor

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