From *Jāmi`ah* to University

Multiculturalism and Christian–Muslim Dialogue

Syed Farid Alatas

National University of Singapore

abstract: Sociology has a role to play in the development of multiculturalism and, therefore, the facilitation of interreligious dialogue. Multiculturalism does not merely refer to the coexistence of a plurality of cultures but is a social context that encourages the possibilities for harmonious interactions of different cultures. Sociology may contribute in meaningful ways to multiculturalism by the thematic development of a number of areas concerning the study of societies and civilizations. This article focuses on three such themes, that is: the multicultural origins of modern civilization, intercivilizational encounters and the point of view of the other. The author argues that these themes are essential for the facilitation of dialogue and the development of the multicultural outlook. Dialogue here is not restricted to the literal sense of the term, that is a conversation between two sides, but rather is a metaphor for peaceful and harmonious relationships founded on mutual trust and admiration and informed by the spirit and substance of multiculturalism.

keywords: dialogue ✦ multiculturalism ✦ religion

Introduction

There *is* a role for the discipline of sociology to play in the development of multiculturalism and, therefore, the facilitation of interreligious dialogue. If we define multiculturalism to mean not just the coexistence of a plurality of cultures but a social context that allows for and encourages the growth and harmonious interaction of different cultures, sociology and the other social sciences can contribute in a fundamental way to multiculturalism by the thematic development of a number of areas concerning the study of societies and civilizations. In this article, I look at three such themes, that is (1) the multicultural origins of modern civilization; (2) intercivilizational encounters of mutual learning; and (3) the point of view of the other. I argue that these themes are essential for the

facilitation of dialogue and the development of the multicultural outlook. Dialogue here is not to be understood in the literal sense of a conversation between two sides but rather as a metaphor for peaceful and harmonious relationships founded on mutual trust and admiration and informed by the spirit and substance of multiculturalism.

Such a role for sociology can be understood to be crucial when it is recognized that much of public discourse in the US and Europe on Islam[1] is dominated by an orthodoxy that lacks a multicultural dimension. In the early days of sociology, the problem was more blatant. For example, in his section on religion and toleration, Ross (1920) noted the discrepancy between the preaching of toleration and its practice. But his criticism of Islam was more fundamental and devastating. In Christianity, intolerance was blamed on the Church while in Islam it was blamed on its founder, Muhammad, himself (Ross, 1920: 328–9). Today, we are unlikely to find such writing in sociology textbooks. The lack of a multicultural sensibility in sociology, however, is all the more difficult to detect in the absence of blatant biases and stereotyping. While these may be largely absent in sociological discourse, they are widespread in public discourse.

Said Nursi noted the all-pervasive influence of the media in this regard. Referring to the outbreak of the First World War, he refers to the 'political diplomats blowing their evils, material and immaterial and their sorcery and poison into everyone's heads through the tongue of the radio and their inculcating their covert plans into the heart of human destiny' (Nursi, 1998: 287).

In the media, there is often the focus on the strange and the bizarre that only serve to 'confirm' stereotypes. Examples are the execution of a princess, terrorist acts and the oppression of women. These are generalized to the whole Muslim world and Islam is reduced to these things in the minds of many people.

The media tend to portray Islam as oppressive (hence women in hijab); that Islam is outmoded (hence hanging, beheading and stoning to death); that Islam is anti-intellectualist (hence book burning); that Islam is restrictive (hence the ban on post- and extra-marital affairs, alcohol and gambling); that Islam is extremist (hence Iran, Algeria and the Taliban); that Islam is backward (hence Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the Sudan); that Islam causes conflict (hence Palestine, Kashmir and Indonesia); and that Islam is dangerous (hence Iran) (see Said, 1981).

It is true that that much of what the media report on Islam does indeed happen. But there are problems with this kind of reporting: (1) there is little attention to positive aspects of the Muslim world; (2) there is little on how Muslims themselves think about the strange and the bizarre; (3) there is little on the plight of Muslims, which might help to provide some

perspective on what might otherwise seem unfathomable; (4) there is little on equally strange and bizarre things that happen within other religious communities; (5) there is little on how Muslims themselves are affected by the transgressions of their own people. In addition to coverage by the media, there are other forces that mould thinking about Islam: (1) lucrative market pressures, for example, the market for Middle East specialists in think tanks or government, where a certain orientation towards Islam or the Muslim world is expected, resulting in the experts conforming; (2) the policy-making process, which draws in only some knowledge and not others; (3) funding sources, for example, pro-Jewish or anti-Arab sources. This should be qualified in that there are many European and American scholars who do distance themselves from this kind of thinking and from the media because they understand how the media are used by policy-makers, and that there have been important achievements in Islamic studies in the West in technical areas like language and economics. But overall, the collective consciousness of the West is dominated by the orthodoxy on Islam. As a result, the world operates on stereotypes. For example, in 1995 many in the US immediately blamed Islamic nations for the Oklahoma City bombing. It was later discovered that a white American carried out the bombing.

Islam has been in a relationship of conflict with the West from the 8th century. Since the inception of Islam, it has been regarded as a threat to the Christian West, resulting in the formation of a centuries-old tradition of hostility towards and the stereotyping of the various Muslim peoples and their religion. The Arabs were present in Spain for 700 years and in Sicily for 500. There were also about 200 years of the wars that are referred to as the Crusades. A few centuries later, the Ottomans made serious incursions into Europe, making their way as far as Vienna. In more recent times, after the rise of Europe and the US as colonial and world powers, the Muslim world remained as a threat and problem, this time in the form of anti-colonial and reform movements in the postcolonial era. Therefore, sentiments of animosity and mutual antagonism have had centuries to develop (Alatas, 2002: 266). By this I mean that the hostility and stereotyping have been mutual. However, there is a differential impact of these hostilities and stereotypes on Islam or Muslim societies as compared to the West or Christianity. The current world dominance of western and in particular American culture and media has meant that these misconceptions and attitudes towards Islam are global in their spread. Nevertheless, what I am suggesting as far the role of sociology in fostering multiculturalism is concerned applies to all societies. In other words, there is also a need for a multicultural approach in teaching sociology in the Muslim world in order to deal with stereotypes against the West, Christianity and Judaism. In this article, however, the focus is on Islam as the other.

The need for a more multicultural approach in the teaching of sociol-
ogy is indicated by the dominance of stereotyping and misunderstand-
ings towards Islam. The primary or fundamental role of sociology, as I
see it however, is not merely to correct stereotypes but to deal with the
problem underlying the prevalence of stereotypes: that is, the absence or
lack of a multicultural outlook. But, is sociology up to the task of develop-
ing and spreading multiculturalism? It would seem that there are signifi-
cant areas in which the teaching of sociology is not informed by a
multicultural imagination. To the extent that American and European
social science curricula are dominant beyond those countries, this lack of
multiculturalism is a global phenomenon.

For people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds to develop
trust, interest, admiration and even compassion for each other, it is
necessary that they are nurtured in an educational environment that
stresses the three themes mentioned earlier. Apart from providing for a
more cosmopolitan education, teaching children and youth about the
multicultural origins of modern civilization, about the history of inter-
civilizational encounters between different groups and about the variety
of points of view would facilitate efforts to bring about harmonious
relationships between ethnic and religious communities that are in
conflict or have the potential for conflict. Does sociology do this? Taking
the example of the concept and definition of religion, it is interesting to
note how little has changed in the last 100 years. In early introductory
works of sociology such as Spencer's *Principles of Sociology* (1893–7),
Ward's *Pure Sociology* (1919) and Ross's *Principles of Sociology* (1920), terms
such as 'religion' were used unproblematically to refer to not just Chris-
tianity but also Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. The problem
of the definition and conceptualization of 'religion' and related terms
such as 'church' and 'sect' from a multicultural point of view, that is, in
terms of the self-understandings of these 'religions', was never raised.
As I discuss in the final section, the same is true of contemporary intro-
ductory sociology texts.

While there is clearly a need for sociology to be involved in the correct-
ing of all types of stereotypes with regard to religion, gender and ethnic-
ity, there is a more fundamental role for sociology which has to do with
the inculcation of a multicultural outlook. Coming back to the example
of Islam, there is a need for a type of discourse on Islam that emphasizes
its contributions to the building of modern civilization as well as the
history of interaction between Islam and other religions in order to estab-
lish a sound basis for interreligious or intercivilizational dialogue. I
propose in this article to indicate what such a discourse would look like
by developing certain themes that emerge from a consideration of the
history of the interaction between the Muslim world and the Christian

West. I do this by taking up a significant instance of this interaction that revolves around the origins of the modern university. It is from the study of the origins of the university and the educational system that emerged around it that a form of proto-dialogue between Islam and Christianity can be seen. The types of relations between Islam and Christianity during the European Middle Ages, the period that concerns us here, as seen through the history of the university, suggest a number of themes of interreligious dialogue: that is, (1) the multicultural origins of modern civilization; (2) intercivilizational encounters of mutual learning; and (3) the point of view of the other. My argument is that it is these themes that had formed the basis of dialogue and harmony between Muslims and Christians in the past and that should inform contemporary social science education in order to facilitate interreligious interaction and dialogue. It is these three themes that would help to bring such dialogue about. But, it is these very themes that are missing in contemporary sociology education.

This article proceeds as follows. The next two sections take up the issue of the origins of the modern university, discussing various early Muslim educational institutions, their underlying philosophy of education and their influence on the rise of the medieval European university. The section that follows then considers the types of relations between Islam and Christianity within the context of the early history of the university, and introduces the three themes of interreligious dialogue that are suggested by that account. I then conclude with a discussion on how these three themes can be introduced into modern education and inform the mission of the university in such a way as to prepare students for dialogue among religions and civilizations.

The Philosophy of Education in Islam and the Rise of Educational Institutions

Education has been a central feature of Islam from the very beginning. Because of the centrality of the Quran as the word of God, Muslims have always been obliged to learn to recite Arabic. This applied even to peoples for whom Arabic was not their mother-tongue, but who may, nevertheless, have used the Arabic script for their languages. This was the case with the Persians, Turks, Afghans, Indians and Malays. As a result, the rate of literacy was relatively high from the early days of Islam. Furthermore, the impetus to the cultivation of knowledge was due to both practical consideration, such as the need to know the *qiblah* (direction of Mecca for prayer), as well as the higher purpose of knowing God's creation and taking it seriously by studying it.

Today, however, educational underdevelopment is a major factor in the

general underdevelopment of Muslim societies. The United Nations Development Programme released the *Arab Human Development Report 2003*, in which the central problems facing Arab education in the 21st century are diagnosed. One issue highlighted was the problem of the lack of quality education. The report cites gaps between the needs of the labour market and the provisions of the educational system. For example, almost 45 million women in the Arab world are illiterate, and as many as 10 million children have had no schooling at all. Investment in research and development is less than one-seventh of the world average.

The problem of education began to be recognized in the 19th century by a number of Muslim scholars and reformers in the Arab world, Iran, India and Southeast Asia. One of the early Muslim scholars to raise this problem was Syed Shaykh al-Hady, who urged the Malays to develop themselves in a more holistic manner, that is, culturally, economically and politically by way of the systematic application of reason and rationality.[2] He established the Madrasah al-Iqbal al-Islamiyyah (Iqbal Islamic School) in Malacca in 1908, which included in its curriculum English, arithmetic, geography, history, elocution and essay writing to supplement the traditional areas of religious instruction (al-Hady, 1999: 78).

In the early 1950s, Syed Hussein Alatas recognized that 'the most urgent problem for the world of Islam to-day is the formation of new elites who are very learned in the Holy Quran, the Hadith, the Sunnah of the Prophet, the Shariat, and last but not least, in the affairs of modern science and philosophy' and that the formation of such elites could only take place by means of education (S. H. Alatas, 1954).

If we define education as the teaching, learning and assimilation of knowledge, much of our understanding of the philosophy of education in Islam hinges on our conception of knowledge. Knowledge in Islam has been defined as the 'arrival of the soul at the meaning of a thing or an object of knowledge' (Al-Attas, 1980: 17). 'Meaning' here refers to the results of the valid methods of interpretation such as *tafsir* and *ta'wil* established by the authority of the Quran. The empirical world is regarded as constituted by signs (*āyat*), that is, words and things amenable to interpretation by valid methods, as the *āyat* (verses) of the Quran are. Knowledge, therefore, refers to the 'recognition of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence' (Al-Attas, 1980: 17–19).

The formal definition of education in Islam as given by Al-Attas is:

> Recognition and acknowledgement, progressively instilled into man, of the proper places of things in the order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence. (Al-Attas, 1980: 22)

In Islam, the definition of education is not confined to epistemological concerns but also includes ethical and other dimensions, presented succinctly by Syed Hussein Alatas as follows:

> Islamic education shall aim at a harmonious formation of the human personality. This education shall not only strive for the harmony of thought and action, instinct and reason, feelings and emotion, but also for depth of knowledge and beauty of character. One can experience harmony also in a negative way. The Islamic concept of harmony includes the formation of a certain type of character rooted in humility towards God, love towards fellow creatures, perseverance in times of affliction, honesty, decency, uprightness, courage to say the truth, a balanced attitude towards issues which involve human emotions, etc. etc. Thus, education without an emphasis on character formation has practically no value in Islam. (Alatas, 1954: 1)

This conception of knowledge that sees knowledge and education not merely as the acquisition of information or the capacity for explanation and analysis but also connects these processes to the nature of God and reality and a human ethic of responsibility by no means implies that only what is in revelation is knowledge or that only what is apparently compatible with revelation is true knowledge. Muslims believe that all knowledge originates from God and that such knowledge arrives to humans by way of various channels. Islamic epistemology, that is the study of the sources, limits and methods of knowledge and the nature of truth from the point of view of Islam, affirms the reality of existence and the reality of things and the possibility of knowledge of both. Such knowledge comes from God and is acquired via the authority of Revelation, the authority of the learned, sense perception, reason and intuition. This in turn implies that both induction from observation and deductive reasoning are valid methods of knowledge acquisition (Al-Attas, 1990: 1).[3]

As knowledge in Islam is intimately related to belief, it can be said that the Islamic worldview, that is, that worldview that can be abstracted from the Quran and the sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (may peace be upon him) consists of both the creed or articles of belief as well the various sciences. Together these form the total consciousness of Islam. Knowledge, therefore, is part of faith. It is obligatory for all Muslims to pursue knowledge and it is obligatory for Muslim societies to cultivate as the various branches of knowledge. It is for this reason that the various sciences (`ulūm) were studied, developed and promoted by Muslims for centuries prior to the European Enlightenment.

A glance at the classification of the sciences that were cultivated by the Muslims and taught in their institutions of higher learning will serve as an introduction to the more practical aspects of Islamic education. The learned Muslim scholars of the past had usually divided knowledge into two kinds – the rational sciences (*al-`ulūm al-`aqliyyah*) and the traditional

sciences (*al-`ulūm al-naqliyyah*). The first, also referred to as the intellectual sciences, is knowledge that arises from human capacity for reason, sense perception and observation. The second, also referred to as revealed knowledge, is not knowledge that dispenses with the intellect but was devolved to humans via Revelation (Ibn Khaldūn, 1971: Ch. 6). The traditional sciences are (1) the sciences of Quranic recitation and interpretation; (2) the sciences of Prophetic traditions (*hadīth*); (3) jurisprudence and its principles (*fiqh* and `*usūl al-fiqh*); (4) speculative theology (`*ilm al-kalām*); and (5) the science of Sufism (*al-tasawwuf*). The rational sciences are (1) logic (`*ilm al-mantiq*); (2) physics (*al-`ilm al-tabī`ī*); (3) metaphysics (*al-`ilm al-ilāhiyyah*); (4) geometry (`*ilm al-handasa*); (5) arithmetic (`*ilm al-artamātīqī*); (6) medicine; (7) geography; (8) chemistry; (9) biology; (10) music (`*ilm al-mūsīqī*); (11) astronomy; and (12) science of civilization (`*ilm al-'umrān*).

The significance of Muslim learning is as follows.

Translations and Commentaries

It has often been assumed in popular accounts of the history of science and philosophy that the Muslim scholars who were contemporaneous with the European Middle Ages were simply followers and translators of the Greeks, Persian and Indians and that they merely continued the philosophies of Peripateticism and Neo-Platonism. For example, Alfred Weber stated that Muslim philosophy was 'more learned than original, and consists mainly of exegesis, particularly of the exegesis of Aristotle's system' (Weber, 1925: 164, n. 1). This was only one of their roles. In addition to being great translators of and commentators on Greek philosophy and science, the Muslims also made original contributions in various fields.

But even in the area of the transmission of the ideas of another civilization, the Muslims were very active. The ancient Hindu idea of the sphericity of the world, which found its way into Latin works after the 15th century, giving Columbus the idea that the earth was shaped like a pear, is one example (Hitti, 1970: 570).

The Emphasis on Causality and Sense Perception

The philosopher Ibn Sina substituted a material cause for Aristotle's metaphysical cause as the middle term in the syllogism. Ibn Rushd was critical of Neo-Platonism and emphasized the importance of causality for valid knowledge. His ideas in the form of Latin Averroism made an important contribution to European critical discussions on religion, which led to the Enlightenment.

The idea of causality had practical applications. For example, Muslim physicians in 14th-century Spain freed themselves from unscientific ideas,

opting for the explanation of the plague in terms of contagion and not divine punishment. The famous physician Ibn al-Khatīb said in a work, *The Plague*:

> ... the existence of contagion is established by experience, study, and the evidence of the senses, by trustworthy reports on transmission by garments, vessels, ear-rings; by the spread of it by persons from one house to another, by infection of a healthy sea-port by an arrival from an infected land ... by the immunity of isolated individuals and ... nomadic Bedouin tribes of Africa... . It must be a principle that a proof taken from the Traditions has to undergo modification when in manifest contradiction with the evidence of the perception of the senses. (Ibn al-Khatīb, cited in Meyerhof, 1931: 340)

The Scientific Method

While the Greeks were more taken in by the deductive method and underplayed sense perception and observation, Muslim scientists went beyond this and based their investigations on observation and experimentation. Muslim scientists Jabir Ibn Hayyan, al-Biruni, Umar Khayyam, Ibn Sina, Ibn Yunus, al-Tusi and others all worked in their own or in state laboratories. This had to do with their belief in the reality of this world and that knowledge of it was possible and that knowledge of it pointed to the Creator.

A very important example of the application of the scientific method was Ibn Haytham's work on optics. He proved Aristotle's thesis that light is reflected from objects to the eye and not the reverse as had been thought. What is important about this is that he arrived at this conclusion via observation and experimentation with lenses, by testing the angles of reflection. The impact of these experiments on the development of the scientific method is something that should be elaborated on.

The Contribution to Institutions of Learning

Even the modern university, as we discuss later, owes its origins to the Muslims. The idea of the degree most likely came from Islam. In 931 AD the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir had all practising physicians examined and those who passed were granted certificates (*ijāzah*). In this way, Baghdad was able to get rid of its quacks (Hitti, 1970: 364).

The *ijāzah* was the principal means by which scholars and Sufis passed on their teachings to students, granting them permission to carry on their teachings. Although the learned scholars of Islam taught in formal institutions of learning such as the *maktab*, the *kuttāb*, the *madrasah* and the *jāmi`ah*, the degree was personally granted by the scholar to the student.

Even in the area of everyday life, there were significant contributions of Muslims. During the Crusades, for example, the Europeans were introduced to sugar, silk, spices, incense and dyes, gold coinage and methods

of banking. The English word 'sugar' comes from the Arabic word *sukr*. 'Sherbet' comes from the Arabic *sharbat*, referring to water sweetened with sugar and flavoured with fruits. 'Syrup' comes from the Arabic *sharāb* which is a medicated sugar solution (Hitti, 1970: 335). In fact, there is an interesting account concerning sherbet that is part of the history of the Crusades. The Sultan Salāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (Saladin) had taken prisoner Reginald of Châtillon, once prince of Antioch and lord of Transjordan, and the king of the Franks, Guy. Reginald was known among the Muslims to be a 'monstrous infidel and terrible oppressor, through whose land a caravan from Egypt (God defend it) had passed when there was a truce between the Muslims and the Franks. He seized it treacherously, maltreated and tortured its members and held them in dungeons and close confinement. They reminded him of the truce, but he replied, "Tell your Muhammad to release you" ' (Ibn Shaddād, 2002 [1228]: 37). Having heard this story, Saladin was determined to avenge his fellow Muslims. He summoned Reginald and the king. The king complained of thirst and Saladin had a glass of sherbet brought to him. After he drank from it, Reginald took the glass. This prompted Saladin to tell the king that it was he (the king) who gave Reginald the sherbet and not Saladin himself. What Saladin meant was that if he himself had offered hospitality to Reginald, chivalry would require that he did not harm him. Later Saladin killed him with his own scimitar (Ibn Shaddād, 2002 [1228]: 37, 74–5).

From the preceding, we may draw the following conclusions about the conception of knowledge that forms the basis of education in Islam:

1. All knowledge comes from God.
2. Muslims had never recognized the division of knowledge into religious and secular. All knowledge comes from God but such knowledge is either about God (as in theology, for example) or about God's creation (as studied by the various rational sciences).
3. Islam recognizes various sources and methods of knowledge acquisition, including sense perception and reason.
4. The acquisition of the various sciences is obligatory upon all Muslim societies because this is one way of taking God's creation seriously. Furthermore, the study of the world of empirical things points to the Creator.

These sciences that Muslims cultivated were taught at various levels in the different types of institutions of learning in the Muslim world prior to the introduction of modern western schools and universities. The following is merely a sketchy account and is not meant to be exhaustive.

The Maktab *and* Kuttāb *(Writing Schools)*

These were schools providing basic instruction in the reading and recitation of the Quran during the first century of Islam. These schools started out as rooms in the homes of private teachers. Such places set aside for instruction came to be known as *maktab* or *kuttāb*, both words derived from the Arabic root 'to write' (Tibawi, 1972: 26). Later on they expanded to provide elementary education in calligraphy, poetry, grammar, arithmetic, penmanship, horsemanship and swimming. The difference between the two seemed to be that the *maktab* was for lower elementary education whereas the *kuttāb* was for older students (Nakosteen, 1964: 46; Makdisi, 1981: 19). For the first four centuries of Islam, the *maktab* was the principal institution where the basic skills of reading and writing could be obtained. Writing schools were found in Spain, Sicily, Africa and throughout Iran and the Arab world.

The Mosque (Masjid) *Schools*

The *masjid* or everyday mosques (which did not hold the Friday congregational prayers) were often sites of instruction for elementary education as well as more advanced education in the various Islamic sciences. Baghdad alone had 3000 such schools by the third century of Islam and were also found throughout the Muslim world. It was quite often that well-known and learned scholars founded and taught at these schools (Nakosteen, 1964: 47; Makdisi, 1981: 21–2).

The Madrasah

The educational institutions described above were limited in terms of the quality of teachers and facilities or scope of instruction. A new type of school, the *madrasah* or school of public instruction, was developed to provide an alternative. These were established as charitable trusts (*awqāf*; sing. *waqf*). The first of such institutions was the renowned Madrasah Nizamiyah of Baghdad, established in 457 AH/1065 AD by the famous Abbasid vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, who later developed a vast network of madrasahs across the Arab world. These schools were provided with the best professors possible, had libraries and even offered scholarships to students (Nakosteen, 1964: 49; Makdisi, 1981: 27). It was at this time that teachers came to be paid by the state. Education was fully subsidized and students sometimes received free lodging and food. The main subjects taught were Quranic exegesis, theology, jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence, grammar and syntax, the Traditions of the Prophet (*hadīth*), logic and, sometimes, philosophy and mathematics (Robinson, 2001: Appendices 1–3; Tibawi, 1972: 30). In addition to the above, other subjects such as literary studies, history, politics, ethics, music, metaphysics, medicine, astronomy and chemistry were also taught. It is known

that in the time of Saladin a similar range of courses were taught (Dodge, 1961: 36, 40–52).

The method of teaching was largely based on recitation, oral exposition, question and answer, and rote learning.[4]

The Jāmi` *(Congregational Mosque) Schools*

The *jāmi`* housed a number of educational institutions such as the *halqa* (study circle), the *zawiya* and *madrasah*, the latter two focusing mainly on instruction in law, unlike the *madrasah* established independently of a *jāmi`* (Makdisi, 1981: 12, 13, 21).

The Jāmi`ah *(University)*

One such *jāmi`* was that of Al-Azhar in Cairo. This was established during the last quarter of the 10th century by the Fatimids to teach the principles of jurisprudence, grammar, philosophy, logic and astronomy (Dodge, 1961: 18). Its name was later changed to Jāmi`at al-Azhar, *jāmi`ah* here meaning universal in terms of a complete course of studies (Dodge, 1961: 13; Wan Mohd Nor, 1998: 183). It is here that we may find the origins of the modern universitas.

The Origins of the Modern University

By university we mean the degree-granting institution that we find in Europe and America from the 12th century and which was introduced to the rest of the world from the 17th century. On the other hand, colleges in Europe were charitable foundations established to help needy students. They were established in a university but were not themselves degree-granting institutions. Gradually, they evolved to become degree-granting institutions, that is, they became more like universities (Makdisi, 1980). According to Makdisi and others, the European university, that is, degree-granting academic institutions, emerged spontaneously in Europe in the 12th century. Makdisi is of the view that the European university is 'strictly a product of Western Europe in the Middle Ages' but acknowledges that the European college, a boarding house of sorts for students requiring financial assistance, is Islamic in origin (Makdisi, 1980: 27).

Makdisi's argument is that the *madrasah* and the western college are essentially the same type of institution. The *madrasah* was established as a charitable trust (*waqf*) founded by individual Muslims, which legally bounded the founder to run it as a madrasah. It had the legal status of an institution but was not a state institution (Makdisi, 1980: 36). According to Makdisi, there are two arguments in favour of the idea of the Islamic origins of the college. One is the *waqf* or charitable trust and the other the internal organization of the college.

The earliest record of the employment of the charitable trust in England is 1224, when it was practised by the friars of the Franciscan order (Pollack and Maitland, 1952: 229; Cattan, 1955: 213, both cited in Makdisi, 1980: 39). Makdisi, following Cattan, suggests that the early English use of the charitable trust was derived from the Muslim *waqf*. This conclusion is based on the similarities between the two systems as well as the fact that the latter predates the former (Makdisi, 1980: 39).

As far as the internal structure of colleges was concerned, there were also striking similarities with their Islamic counterparts that predate them. Muslim colleges had the *sāhib* (fellow) and *mutafaqqih* (scholar). The Latin equivalent to *sāhib*, *socius*, an exact translation of the Arabic, was employed in the colleges (Makdisi, 1980: 40).

For Makdisi, the university, strictly of European origin, absorbed the functions of the college, which had Islamic origins. He also notes that when colleges attained university status they preserved those character-istics which were of Muslim origin (Makdisi, 1980: 42). This being the case, we could go further to say that the Islamic educational institution, whether *madrasah* or *jāmi`ah*, was also the origin of the European university and not just the European college.[5] The following are points in support of this position.

The Term Universitas

Although the Latin term *universitas* predates Islam, its use as a reference to an educational institution in Europe appears for the first time in 1221 (Gabriel, 1989: 12: 282, cited in Wan Mohd Nor, 1998: 182). According to European accounts, the term was used to refer to the organization of students into a union, that is, a *universitas*. Another theory, however, relates *universitas* to the Muslim *jāmi`ah*. The term *jāmi`ah*, meaning 'universal', was used to refer to Al-Azhar in the 10th century. The idea of the *universitas* as the site where universal knowledge is taught, where the branches of knowledge of a universal nature are taught (hence *jāmi`ah*, *universitas*) appeared only after the *madrasah* and *jāmi`ah* had been estab-lished in the Muslim world.[6]

The Ijāzah

The Islamic educational institutions were degree (*ijāzah*) granting. This predates degree granting in European medieval universities. In this regard, there have been some interesting discussions on the origins of the term *baccalaureus*. In the 1930s, the renowned Orientalist Alfred Guillaume noted strong resemblances between Muslim and western Christian insti-tutions of higher learning. An example he cited is the *ijāzah*, which he recognized as being akin to the medieval *licentia docendi*, the precursor of the modern university degree (Guillaume, 1931: 244). Guillaume

suggested that the Latin *baccalaureus* may have originated from the Arabic *bi haqq al-riwāya* (the right to teach on the authority of another) but was unable to go beyond this speculation (Guillaume, 1931: 245). Later, Ebied and Young, aware of Guillaume's suggestion, discussed the appearance of the exact phrase *bi haqq al-riwāya* as a technical term in documents called *ijāzah* that conferred the right to teach on the recipient (Ebied and Young, 1974: 3–4). The theory is that the phrase *bi haqq al-riwāya* was assimilated to *baccalaureus*.

Makdisi points out that there are fundamental differences between the western and Muslim systems of certification, that is, the *ijāzah* and the *licentia docendi*. In Europe, the licence to teach was granted for a particular field of knowledge and conferred with the authority of the Church. In the Muslim world, the right to teach was conferred by the teacher to the student for a particular work or works (Makdisi, 1970: 260) and was not dependent upon the institution or state.

The Facultas

The European notion of *facultas* (faculty) may be a direct translation of Arabic *quwwah*, referring to the power inherent in an organ.[7]According to Al-Attas, 'the university must have been conceived in emulation of the general structure, in form, function and purpose, of man' (Al-Attas, 1979: 38, cited in Wan Mohd Nor, 1998: 181). This seems to be the sense in which *facultas* was used in the medieval European university. This is in line with the suggestion that the term faculty in the beginning referred to a branch of instruction rather than its present meaning of professional body.[8]

Muslim–Christian Relations: The Emergence of Dialogue

The earliest form of dialogue between Islam and Christianity can be said to have taken place in the Quran, where the Christian doctrine is referred to in explicit terms. For example, the verse, 'He begetteth not nor was begotten; And there is none comparable unto Him' (*Al-Ikhlās*: 3–4) is clearly a reference to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Within the first three centuries of Islam, several works refuting Christian doctrines had appeared. The *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (The Catalogue) of Abu al-Faraj Muhammad Ibn Ishāq al-Nadīm (d. 995 AD), an index of books written in Arabic, lists the works of several authors who dealt with Christian theological doctrines, none of which have survived (Thomas, 1992: 32). Among them are Dhirār bin `Amr (*Kitāb al-Radd `alā al-Nasārā* – The Book of Refutation of the Christians), Hafs al-Fard (*Kitāb al-Radd `alā al-Nasārā*), Bishr bin Mu`tamir (*Kitāb al-Radd `alā al-Nasārā*), `Isā bin Subīh al-Murdār (*Kitāb al-Radd `alā al-Nasārā*), Abū al-Hudhayl al-`Allāf (*Kitāb `alā al-Nasārā*

Book on the Christians) (al-Nadīm, 1988: 184–5, 203–4, 206–7, 214–15, 229–30).

Among those that have survived are four works of the same title (*Radd `alā al-Nasārā*) by `Alī bin Rabban al-Tabarī, Abū `Uthmān al-Jāhiz, Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī and al-Qāsim Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Hasanī (Thomas, 1992: 32).

The discussion on Christianity was not always one-sided. There were often exchanges between Muslim and Christian scholars. Among the first Christians to enter into polemics with Muslims was St John of Damascus (Sahas, 1972, cited in Thomas, 1992: 31). There was also the debate between the Nestorian patriarch, Timothy I, and the Caliph al-Mahdī (Mingana, 1928, cited in Thomas, 1992: 31), and between the Shi`ite theologian, Hishām Ibn Hakam, and a Christian patriarch, Barīha (Thomas, 1988).

Thus the early contact between Islam and Christianity was in the form of debates and polemics. What are more significant for Muslim–Christian dialogue are the later developments that brought about a new kind of relationship between Christians and Muslims. This is the relationship of cultural borrowing of Christians from Muslims. This cultural borrowing to a large extent revolved around the Muslim universities of the past. It is the phenomenon of the influence of Muslim universities on the medieval West and the cultural borrowings of Christians from Muslims in these institutions that suggests the three themes of interreligious dialogue that began to emerge in the 13th century, during the period of the rise of the western university: (1) the multicultural origins of modern civilization; (2) intercivilizational encounters of mutual learning; and (3) the point of view of the other. The relations between Muslims and Christians that revolved around the Muslim university provide concrete examples of each of these themes.

The Multicultural Origins of Modern Civilization
The story of the origins of the medieval university and its Islamic roots is a case in point. To the extent that Muslim educational institutions such as the *madrasah* and *jāmi`ah* influenced the rise of medieval universities and colleges in Europe, the modern university must be seen as a multicultural product.

Intercivilizational Encounters
The university was also the site of intercivilizational encounters. For example, Frederick II (1194–1250 AD), Holy Roman Emperor of the Hohenstaufen dynasty, came into contact with Muslims in Sicily and during the Crusades. He was so impressed with the culture that he adopted Arab dress, customs and manners. More importantly, he admired their philosophic works. He was apparently able to read these works in the original Arabic (O'Leary, 1939: 280). In 1224 AD, Frederick founded the University

of Naples. This was to specialize in translating the scientific works of Muslims from Arabic into Latin and Hebrew (O'Leary, 1939: 281). It was through the encouragement of Frederick that Michael Scot spent time in Toledo in 1217 and translated some works of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) on Aristotle (O'Leary, 1939: 281). The great Christian theologian St Thomas Aquinas had himself studied at the University of Naples, was exposed to the works of the Muslim philosophers and their commentaries on Aristotle there, and frequently entered into theological debates with them (O'Leary, 1939: 285–6). By the middle of the 13th century, almost all the philosophical writings of Ibn Rushd had been translated into Latin. A peculiarly Christian appropriation of Ibn Rushd began to develop in Europe and came to be known as Latin Averroism, establishing itself in various European universities such as Bologna, Padua and Paris (O'Leary, 1939: 290–1, 294).

The Point of View of the Other

The intercivilizational encounters between Muslims and Christians, whether this was direct and personal or indirect via texts, would have developed in some the ability to view reality from the point of view of the other. The example that I have in mind is the historic meeting between St Francis of Assisi and the Sultan Malik al-Kāmil of Egypt during the Fifth Crusade. St Francis and a companion named Illuminatus set off for Egypt with the aim of converting Sultan Malik. According to Christian accounts of this event, the Sultan was eager to listen to what St Francis had to say about Christianity, and although he was not inclined to leave Islam, developed a deep admiration for St Francis. The Sultan invited St Francis to visit a mosque, where he asked St Francis to pray for him as he would for St Francis. St Francis, for his part, was able to see the humanity of Islam and modified his preconceptions of the religion (Bonaventura, 1950 [1260]: 361–3).[9] For the Catholics, and the Franciscans in particular, St Francis had entered into a true spirit of dialogue with Islam and was sincere about the positive values that were to be found in that religion to the point of being inspired. For example, after witnessing the *adhān* or call to prayers in Egypt, St Francis suggested his people should praise and thank God every sunset after the appropriate signal by a herald for instance (Wintz, 2003). The case of St Francis and the Sultan clearly illustrates what results from a realization of the point of view of the other.

Bringing the Themes of Intercivilizational Dialogue to Sociology Education

Yet, the discipline of sociology has not taken up this mission in a serious way. A survey of introductory textbooks would confirm this. We are

unlikely to find the three themes informing the bulk of discussions in such texts. The sections and chapters on religion in most sociology textbooks are illustrations of the lack of the multicultural sensibility that constiutes the three themes.

For example, Giddens's *Sociology*[10] briefly discusses the Crusades from the perspective of the European Christians. Many people are familiar with accounts of the Crusades from the point of view of the European crusaders. Although the point of view of Muslims who fought the crusaders and who then lived among the Europeans when they settled in and around Palestine between Crusades would contribute to a more complete picture of that history, this is seldom presented in standard text-books.

The basic concepts and terms in the sociological study of religion introduced by Giddens such as church, sect, denomination and cult, tend to be derived from one religious tradition, Christianity. This is not only true of Giddens's text but is widespread in sociology textbooks. Macionis refers to the state church of Islam in Morocco (Macionis, 2005: 494). While it is true that some of these concepts may be employed in a more universal way and are applicable to non-Christian religions, at the same time it cannot be denied that something will be gained from bringing in comparable or parallel concepts from other religions. Take for example the concept of religion itself. Any adequate conceptualization of religion would require a study of the similar concepts, that is, those that are claimed to be translations of 'religion', to be found in religions other than Christianity. The examples I have in mind are *dīn* (Islam) and *dharma* (Hinduism). I am not suggesting that this should be done in an introductory sociology textbook. But, these concepts could at least be introduced and defined in order to present a more nuanced and complex understanding of religion, had the point of view of the other been made explicit. On the other hand, we are forced to contend with the point of view or experience of the other when the conceptual vocabulary of other religions is introduced. Giddens himself notes that the four concepts of church, sect, denomination and cult have to be applied with caution because they do not always apply to non-Christian religions (Giddens, 1997: 448). Yet, a table appears in his text that provides statistics on church membership in the UK and lists not only Christian churches but other religions as well (Giddens, 1997: 461). What might be assumed by readers is that, for example, the mosque is to Muslims as the church is to Christians.

Other chapters in Giddens's *Sociology* that together cover the scope of sociology tend not to give a picture of the multicivilizational contributions or factors that went into the making of modern society and the intercivilizational encounters that were a part of it. The discussion on the early origins of sociology does not refer to non-western precursors of

sociologists. Neither is there any reference to non-western sociologists or social thinkers who were contemporaneous with Comte, Marx, Weber and Durkheim (Giddens, 1997: 7–11). In the discussion on types of societies, the section on pastoral societies makes no reference to non-western scholars. Evans-Pritchard on the Nuer is mentioned but not Ibn Khaldūn on the pastoral nomads. It is not necessary to provide more examples from Giddens's text to make my point. Furthermore, Giddens is not being singled out for attack. No one sociologist is to be blamed for writing a sociology textbook that does not thematize the multicultural origins of modern civilization, intercivilizational encounters of mutual learning and the point of view of the other. But it is odd that the discipline of sociology has not attempted to address the problem of the lack of multiculturalism via the teaching of introductory sociology, sociological theory, development sociology and other subareas of the discipline.

This article aims to advance the hope spread in the early part of the last century by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, that 'man's true nature will search with all its strength for eternal life, which it truly loves and yearns for' (Nursi, 2002: 167). As noted by Thomas Michel, Nursi was among the first religious personalities of the 20th century who advocated interreligious dialogue (Michel, 1998). Such a hope is our incentive to pursue the idea of interreligious and intercivilizational dialogue, a task that sociology is not irrelevant to.

Notes

An earlier version of this article was presented at the Conferences of the Order to the International Council for Formation and Studies, St Francis House, Seoul, 19 February 2005. The theme of these meetings was 'Dialogue, the Path to Peace: What Kind of Formation in a Multi-Cultural and Multi-Religious Context'.

1. A distinction should be made between the US and Europe, although I am not able to deal with the distinctions between the two in this article. Suffice to say, as far as the problem of the lack of multiculturalism as I have defined it in sociology teaching is concerned, there is little difference between the two.
2. For a critical evaluation of al-Hady's thought, see Shaharuddin Maaruf (1988: Ch. 4).
3. Al-Attas here draws our attention to al-Taftāzānī's commentary on the *`Aqā`id* of al-Nasafī which contains the creed of Islam rendered in concise form and which contains the epistemological position of Islam (Al-Attas, 1990: note 1).
4. For more on these methods, see Haddad (1974). On the veneration accorded to teachers in Islam, see Robinson (1980).
5. This was a point stressed by Syed Muhammad Al-Naquib Al-Attas several times in personal communications.
6. Al-Attas, pers. comm., various occasions.
7. Al-Attas, pers. comm., various occasions.

8. Catholic Encyclopedia, at: www.newadvent.org/cathen/11495a.htm (accessed 1 March 2005).
9. Sermon at Christ Church, Freemantle, Southampton, St Francis of Assisi Day, celebrated on 10 October 2004; at: www.realmail.co.uk/~storyline/ francis_islam.htm (accessed 2 March 2005).
10. It is not my intention to attack Giddens here. I merely wish to point out that contemporary sociology texts generally lack the multicultural sensibility as I have defined it. What I am saying about Giddens's text applies to most others as well.

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Biographical Note: Syed Farid Alatas is an associate professor at the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore, where he has been since 1992. He lectured at the University of Malaya in the Department of Southeast Asian Studies prior to his appointment at Singapore. His published work includes the book *Democracy and Authoritarianism: The Rise of the Post-Colonial State in Indonesia and Malaysia* (London: Macmillan, 1997) and articles 'The Study of the Social Sciences in Developing Societies: Towards an Adequate Conceptualization of Relevance', *Current Sociology* 49(2), 2001: 1–19; (with Vineeta Sinha) 'Teaching Classical Sociological Theory in Singapore: The Context of Eurocentrism', *Teaching Sociology* 29(3), 2001: 316–31; 'Islam, Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial dan Masyarakat Sipil', *Antropologi Indonesia* 25(66), 2001: 13–22; and 'Eurocentrism and the Role of the Human Sciences in the Dialogue among Civilizations', *The European Legacy* 7(6), 2002: 759–70. His next book *Alternative Discourses in Asian Social Science: Responses to Eurocentrism* (Sage) will appear in March 2006.

Address: Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore, 11 Arts Link, #03–10, Singapore 117570. [email: socsfa@nus.edu.sg]