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ISLAM AND ENLIGHTENMENT

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Muslims living in Germany are frequently given the advice that they – or their religion – should undergo some sort of enlightenment. This advice is, of course, never given without an element of condescension. "Enlightenment" is a metaphor; what it means is "You have been living in darkness, and we can bring you the light you need. We have got it ourselves long ago". The question which remains is: "What kind of darkness are we in, and which light do we receive?". In Germany the "light" which people think Islam is in need of is a critical reevaluation of the Quran. This is an argument which normally comes from the side of liberal Protestants; since the 19th century German protestantism has analyzed its Holy Scripture, the Old as well as the New Testament, with philological or historical methodology, scrutinizing the texts to the last detail, putting them upside down as it were. This was not always met with approval, nor by everybody. For a long time the Catholics were the addressee, and they were not pleased by this fury of deconstruction. Fundamentalist Protestants do not feel convinced either; therefore Bible criticism is much less influential in the United States than in Germany. Western countries have different traditions of Christian religion. This also applies to enlightenment; it is important to know that German enlightenment was not the same as that of other European areas.

The countries which "invented" enlightenment were France and Scotland, in a way also the Netherlands, and the movement found its most radical expression in France, in connection with the French Revolution. In France the target of the attack was not so much the Bible but religion as such. Religion was considered to be irrational;

moreover it was represented by an institution, the Catholic Church which was considered to be old-fashioned and seemed to keep the believing masses in ignorance. The priests were said to have achieved this by preaching a belief in miracles, in saints etc., concepts which could not stand the test of reason. There was a temple in Paris during the Revolution where Reason was venerated as a goddess, in a way Christ was venerated in a Catholic mass. In the most fanatical phase of the Revolution the Church was persecuted together with the clergy in the same way the monarchy was abolished together with the nobility; both had been the two pillars of the old régime. Nothing of this happened in Germany. Enlightenment came late, and it was not accompanied by a political or social revolution. The country was neither centralized nor religiously united. The Catholic Church had already been weakened by Luther's reformation, and enlightenment was strongest where a local Protestant church worked together with a small principality, in a kind of "cohabitation" where nobody seriously thought of a revolution. Kant became the figure-head of German enlightenment, in the town of Königsberg far in the East of Prussia, and his philosophy had no revolutionary ambitions; Kant's main concern was individual responsibility. In France enlightenment became a "movement" and a political ideology; in Germany it remained an enterprise of individual thinkers who lived in a rather conservative society.

After this introduction I can ask the question I want to treat today: What does this mean for the dialogue with Islam? Is enlightenment something which can be imposed on Islam? In the eighteenth century when enlightenment was strongest in Europe non-European civilizations, the Islamic world as well as China, could serve as an ideal which was compared with European darkness (think of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*). But was there anything like enlightenment in Islam? This question had to be answered in a differentiated way. There was certainly not an enlightenment as a revolutionary movement or a collective feeling. In our days there are people who say that the Ismailis represented an enlightened version of Islam, or that the Alevis do so, at least when we meet them in Germany, as German citizens of Turkish origin. But this is a misunderstanding. Ismailis and Alevis are identified as enlightened in Western Europe because they leave the impression of not applying Islamic ritual and Islamic law in the usual way; for Christians, especially Protestant Christians, this is a

sign of mental liberty because the early Christians acted similarly with regard to Jewish law. But the analogy is wrong. The Ismaili and the Alevi variety of Islam are originally based on gnosticism or theosophy or however you call it, and not on enlightenment.

So, let us rephrase our question: Was there in Islam enlightenment as an individual experience which did not take on the form of an overall movement? Yes, this existed, and this is what I want to talk about. We should, however, not confound this variety of enlightenment with atheism. Real atheism, i.e. the belief that there is no God, was a rare thing everywhere, even in Western enlightenment. Voltaire was no atheist; he was against an institution, the Catholic Church, and against positive religion. Similarly in Classical Islam. We find individuals who are said to have rejected certain doctrines and rules of established Islam, but it is almost impossible to find persons who denied the existence of God. There were people who did not conceal their scepticism or their agnosticism with regard to positive religion; they may appear in our sources under the name of *zanadiqa*. And there were also people who believed that the world is not created and that there may be a God who is not a Creator; they were called Dahriyya. But this latter variety is usually spoken of in a very general way, and no names are mentioned. Only Ibn Hazm who wrote in Islamic Spain has a few names; but these persons were Jews and not Muslims, highly respected in their society because they practiced medicine and had perhaps inherited their scepticism from Greek Antiquity. I leave them also aside, for I want to concentrate on the Muslims. The great difference between medieval Islam and medieval Western Christianity is the cultural plurality in which the Muslims lived. Early Islam was surrounded by a multitude of different religions and beliefs all of which had emerged and grown up in the Near East whereas Christianity (which was also Near Eastern in its origins) when it became the religion of the Europeans outside Italy remained alone in the wilderness. For centuries to come German Christians knew only one religious minority with whom they lived together: the Jews – until they split in the Reformation and created plurality among themselves.

Enlightenment is a metaphor, as I said. The French called the new Age they had entered "l'âge des lumières", the age of light. In the

same vein the Quran had said: *Qad ja'akum min Allahi nur*^{un} , "there has come to you from God a light" (Surat al-Ma'ida 5:15). Equally one of the Gospels promises to bring "light into the darkness". But what light is it? For the Quran it is spiritual "clarification" (*bayan*), making things clear, just as in German language enlightenment is called "Aufklärung", the clearing up of the horizon when the clouds disappear from the sky and the sun breaks through. The *bayan* has the function of clarifying the errors of the past, for all earlier religions, though not being entirely untrue, had ultimately failed in reaching their goal according to the Quran. The last failure had been Christianity. It brought a lot of theology, but the result of it was only *ikhtilaf,* dissent and schism, the split into several Churches which constantly argued against each other. Seen under this perspective, the Quran could be understood as a Scripture of reformatory intention, and this reform presented itself as enlightenment, by bringing light into the darkness of the world.

However, Islam did not escape its destiny either, the same destiny which had hit Christianity. There were people who were not content, and there was criticism, criticism which came up from outside and used the same metaphor again. We possess a few fragments of a treatise attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffa' which was refuted later on by a Zaydi theologian, the imam al-Qasim b. Ibrahim. We do not know whether Ibn al-Muqaffa' really was the author. He could have been because he was a Zoroastrian or a Manichean in his youth and converted to Islam rather late. But he was also a famous man, a bureaucrat (*katib*) who served some Arab governor in Iran during the Umayyad period und who translated several books from ancient Iranian literature; so perhaps the text was simply attributed to him later on, apocryphal as we say. But I leave this question aside; what is important for us here is that the text was anti-Islamic in any case – or sounded so to the man who refuted it later on.

What Islam was blamed for in the few passages which are still preserved was the way the Muslims impose their Scripture, the Quran, on the non-believers, for they did so, as says the author, without attempting to persuade anybody by rational argumentation; the audience is rather expected to believe in the holy text without *bahth*, i.e. without personal investigation into the truth of what is said.

This is, says the author, something which would never be done in business, on the market; nobody buys anything without having had a close look at it before, let alone in a situation where what is offered is said to be a revelation. This polemics was, of course, partly based on a misunderstanding. The early Muslims had not tried, in the areas they had conquered, to sell their faith to their new subjects, on the contrary ! Instead of forcing them to become adherents of the new religion they had made them pay taxes and had kept the Quran for themselves; in the beginning Islam was a religion of the Arabs. Also in Iran, as a matter of fact, for Ibn al-Muqaffa's father had worked for the Arabs in the Umayyad period without converting to Islam; he had been a tax-collector, and when he tried to keep some money for himself or had given his new masters an amount lesser than expected they had tortured him, and his fingers were crippled from this moment onward. Ibn al-Muqaffa' had got his name from that: "the son of the man with the crippled fingers".

Yet with the advent of the Abbasids the situation had changed. The son, i.e. Ibn al-Muqaffa' himself, had converted to Islam, and he had possibly been simply asked to do so when he shifted his loyalty to the new dynasty and wanted to keep his job. In all probability he had not converted because he considered the Quran to be an unusually convincing text. For at a certain moment he had written a *mu'arada* of the Quran; he had imitated its style, and we still have a few examples of his parody. This means that he did not believe in *i'jaz*, but this should not surprise us, for the doctrine of *i'jaz* came up much later, among the Mu'tazilites. Ibn al-Muqaffa' accepted the Quran only as the founding document of the new religion. Likewise the text from which I started treats the Quran as a book which is flawed because it contains improbable reports. During the battle of Badr, for instance, God is supposed there to have sent angels who had to help the Muslims against the *mushrikun*, the unbelieving Meccans. Why did He do that? Would it not have been more effective if God himself had come to help, and why did He not send any angels later on, during the battle of Uhud which was lost by the Muslims? It seems, says the author, that God did not have enough power Himself; otherwise He would simply not have allowed the defeat of Uhud or any other evil to happen. And why is it that, in the Quran, God is depicted as being angry or grieved? Such feelings are not appropriate for somebody

who is beyond all human weakness (*ta'ala 'anhu*). The reason is, says the author, that the new religion is not rational enough; otherwise it would not have transferred reactions which we know from human beings into the sphere of the Divine. When using human categories with regard to God, the Quran applies *tashbih* as the Mu'tazilites would have said later on; this was, as could be argued, the fault of its prophet who was a "man from the Tihama", the plain at the coast of the Red Sea. This comment about Muhammad was, when said by an Iranian, certainly not a compliment; the text insinuates that Muhammad came from an area where the population had barely been touched by Iranian civilization and where the way of thinking was still barbarian, not yet refined by reason.

These are formulations which smack of enlightenment. In fact the text we have been using (and which exists – let me repeat that – only in a few fragments preserved in a later refutation) started with a kind of hymn in honor of light which to later ears sounded as a parody of Islam:

Bismi n-nuri r-rahmani r-rahim.
Ta'ala n-nur al-malik al-'azim.

For later Muslims this could only be a provocation. Unfortunately we do not know how Ibn al-Muqaffa's contemporaries reacted. Are we perhaps dealing here simply with an attempt to persuade the Muslims that a theology based on the concept of light was a better solution than a kind of thinking which was based entirely on the Quran? Again we do not know. In any case this *Bismi n-nuri r-rahmani r-rahim* was not an attempt at introducing dualism (*thanawiyya*), for darkness, the inevitable partner of light in dualism, is not mentioned anywhere. The decisive point was that the suggestion however it was meant came from outside, and the Arabs did not appreciate that, at least not at this moment of their history. A system based on the concept of light would not have been impossible in Islam, but we find it only much later, again in Iran, in the philosophy of Suhrawardi al-Maqtul who was executed in Aleppo at the order of Salahaddin, the Ayyubid ruler during the time of the Crusades. The Quran was not strictly against it: "God is the Light of Heaven and Earth" is said in sura 24 v. 35 – the famous light-verse. In a way, the first years after the Abbasid revolution were still a period of intellectual freshness and

optimism, but outside Iran the idea never had a chance. The refutation was written in Egypt, as a matter of fact.

I leave it at that and pass to my next example: Ibn ar-Rawandi with whom some of these ideas come up again. He lived some 150 years after Ibn al-Muqaffa', and I shall have to treat him together with somebody else who is frequently mentioned in connection with him: Abu 'Isa al-Warraq. The intellectual background had changed. The Muslims had become sure of themselves and of their message; foreign ideas had ceased to be a danger. Meanwhile a forceful Islamic theology had emerged which had not yet existed in Ibn al-Muqaffa's time and which could now decide what was Islamic and what was not. I am alluding here, of course, to the Mu'tazilites; they had engaged in a dialogue with the religions of their environment: Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Judaism, Manicheism and so on. People used to call this dialogue a "talk" (*kalam*), but it was a talk which developed into a science and an art (*'ilm al-kalam* as one said) and frequently turned into polemics or refutation. The Muslim theologians had become aware of their identity, and sometimes they did not resist the temptation of exploiting their political and social superiority. The Abbasids had built their new capital in Iraq, Baghdad, and when, under Harun ar-Rashid, the Barmakids came into power as wazirs they started inviting representatives of the different religious communities to the court where they formed a priviledged circle in which theology was a highly respected spiritual pastime and the basis of conversation. There were almost no limits to participation. Among the Muslims also a Shii was invited, Hisham b. al-Hakam, a man from Kufa who, after his death, was heavily attacked by the Mu'tazilites. But he was a mere theoretician who had nothing to do with those Shii activists who, from time to time, rebelled against the Abbasid government.

There was, however, one exception: Manicheism. The Barmakids maintained good relations with the Chief Mobad of the Zoroastrians, but they excluded the Manicheans, and they had to do so because the Manicheans had been removed from the public sphere shortly before Harun ar-Rashid's time. The religion created by the prophet Mani in the first half of the third Christian century had expanded enormously under the Sasanids in Iran, and when Islam entered the scene Manicheism was still a living force; Ibn al-Muqaffa' had, as I

said, perhaps adhered to it before his conversion. The Barmakids were aware of Manichean presence; they originated themselves from Balkh in Central Asia where the Manicheans had settled on their way to China. However, the Manicheans were not foreseen in the catalogue of *ahl al-kitab* mentioned in the Quran, and what was worse: they had clashed with the Abbasid government shortly before, under the caliph al-Mahdi. They had done something which even the Christians did not do under Muslim rule: they had missionized. They were the youngest in the spectrum of religions which had existed before the advent of Islam, and they had tried to win adherents by way of progressive and new ideas. In our days, we have difficulties to understand why their propaganda was so attractive; the Manichean texts which have been unearthed by modern research look strange and phantastic, weird speculations which do not deserve any serious attention. But Muslim intellectuals had a different impression; they liked these speculations because they offered answers to highly controversial problems, for instance in cosmology. How did the world come into existence, and what will be its end? How does Evil come about, and what can be done against it? The answers were theoretical and even irrational, but they were offered as part of a coherent system which had been stripped of its mythological origins and looked like serious knowledge kept secret for the happy few. We feel reminded of modern scientology, and we should not forget that modern cosmology, too, works with assumptions and terms – the "black holes" for instance – which are beyond our horizon and which we nevertheless accept with confident admiration. Something of this sort, admiration for esoteric ideas which pretend to explain the riddles of the universe, seems to have emerged among the intellectuals who belonged to the upper class in the newly founded city of Baghdad, civil servants and bureaucrats (*kuttab*) as well as scholars and poets. They lived in their own world, and they were apparently not yet influenced by the upcoming Islamic theology; Dirar b. ʿAmr, the first Iraqi *mutakallim* we know of, had just started publishing in Kufa at that time. But soon, and probably because of theological opposition, these same intellectuals who had succumbed to Manichean influence were felt to have become a danger to Muslim identity; this is how they became the victims of a persecution started by the government under al-Mahdi in the early sixties of the second century Hijra, less than

two decades before the Barmakids started their new religious policy. It is on these people at least that our historical reports concentrate: Muslims who had been misled by a non-Islamic temptation. The Manicheans themselves seem to have simply left the town and Iraq on the whole, retiring to Samarqand where their leader, the so-called Archegos, resided later on.

For our topic this event is important insofar as we are confronted with a new term which originated there and is going to accompany us through the centuries: *zandaqa*. Even the Ottoman scholar Kemalpashazade wrote a treatise about it in the 16th century. For the Abbasid government the Manicheans as well as those who had been seduced by them were *zanadiqa* (plural of *zindiq*). This was a word taken over into Arabic from Middle Persian where it had been used already by the Zoroastrians (the Majus) with regard to the Manicheans. Under Sasanid rule they had treated the Manicheans as people who applied a misleading commentary or interpretation (*zand*) to Iranian dualism. They themselves, the Majus, had the Zand Avesta, the good commentary to the ancient Persian writings, but the Manicheans had then tried to reinterpret the old system, and this was wrong. They were zand-iks, which meant: heretics, propagators of a mistaken interpretation. A text like the one which I treated in the beginning and which had still been allowed to circulate in the time of Ibn al-Muqaffa' would now have been impossible; it would have been destroyed immediately if found in the hands of one of the *zanadiqa*. We hear that one of those who had been accused of hidden Manichean leanings, a Muslim then, was forced to spit on one of Mani's writings and the wonderful pictures it contained, and there was even an office created for organizing the persecution and the trials: the *sahib az-zandaqa*. We do not know who held this function under al-Mahdi, and the position did obviously not last for a long time. But it was characteristic for the overheated atmosphere which dominated at that moment those quarters of Baghdad where the upper class used to live.

With all this in mind I come back to Ibn ar-Rawandi. For centuries to come, until nowadays as a matter of fact, he was the paradigmatic *zindiq* in Islam. Ibn al-Muqaffa' has never acquired such a bad reputation; he rather remained the translator of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and the author of the *K. al-Adab al-kabīr*. Ibn ar-Rawandi on the contrary

was only remembered for his scandalous behaviour, in spite of the fact that the talk about him may have been based on mere ignorance. The talk originated in Baghdad, but in Baghdad he was a foreigner. He came from Iran; this is one of the rare things we know for sure about him. We can infer this from his name; Râwand/Rêwand was somewhere in Khorasan, there are several places of this name. He was a Mu'tazilite, and an experienced one at that. In Iran he had made a career; he had written several books, and there had not been much criticism as it seems. But his theology had a Shii touch; this corresponded to the intellectual climate prevailing in Iran when the Tahirids governed the country. He appreciated Hisham b. al-Hakam, the Shii theologian from Kufa who had been invited to Baghdad by the Barmakids one century ago. However the Shiis had been hit by a deep crisis in the meantime; the twelfth imam had disappeared (or perhaps never existed), and a theological solution to this problem was not yet in sight. We do not know to what extent Ibn ar-Rawandi was affected by this crisis. He may have come to Baghdad in order to study Arabic grammar; we hear about contacts with the philologist al-Mubarrad who was just working on his *K. al-Muqtadab* and who, incidentally, was a boon-companion (*nadim*) of the Tahirids while he lived in the capital and in Samarra.

Among the Baghdadi Mu'tazilites, however, Shiism was out. Jahiz had attacked Hisham b. al-Hakam's theology, long after Hisham's death as a matter of fact. He had written a *K. Fadīlat al-Mu'tazila* where he expounded his arguments; his anti-Shii bias went together with a praise of his own school, and the title of his book (*Fadīlat al-Mu'tazila*) is, as far as I can see, the first instance where the name Mu'tazila appears in such a prominent position, as the label of a school which had an identity of its own beyond the numerous individual circles. Ibn ar-Rawandi retaliated on the same level; he wrote a *K. Fadīhat al-Mu'tazila* (or *Fadā'ih al-Mu'tazila*) where he attacked Jahiz's statements one by one. But by choosing this title he offended the entire Mu'tazili community in Baghdad. This is why al-Khayyat, the head of the Baghdadi school, wrote the *K. al-Intisār*, one of the rare early Mu'tazili texts which survived until today. Khayyat's book did not care so much about Jahiz; it was composed around 270 H., and Jahiz had died some 15 years before. Khayyat rather defended the honor of the school as such. But this is not our topic. Ibn ar-Rawandi had

already left Baghdad by then, and he never returned. Most people in Baghdad thought that he had died, but this was obviously not the case. He continued writing, and the books he published now contained all those radical arguments by which he earned himself the reputation of being a *zindiq*. In Iran they seem to have circulated widely whereas Khayyat spoke of the *kutub mal'una*, the execrable books. None of them is preserved in its entirety; we can therefore not be sure of their ultimate tendency. But we have a considerable number of fragments, the scandalous passages which attracted the attention of the reader. They demonstrate Ibn ar-Rawandi's enormous dialectical skill; he enjoyed playing the advocate of the devil and pointing to the hidden weakness of positions which had been accepted by common consensus. This does not necessarily exclude that, though attacking these positions he held them himself. It is true that he was a negative thinker, but perhaps he only pleaded for more solid reasoning or enjoyed making trouble. He certainly did not make life easy for the Mu'tazilites, and it is clear that at the moment when this happened the Mu'tazilites in Iraq also started being attacked from other sides, by Ibn Kullab for instance. But Ibn ar-Rawandi never transgressed the boundaries of Islam; he only showed that Islamic theology was built on unsafe ground. In his case *zindiq* does not mean a crypto-Manichean, not even a free-thinker in our sense of the word, for he never doubted the existence of God. He was a heretic only if we assume that there was something like a Mu'tazili orthodoxy in Baghdad at that time.

The arguments he used cover a wide range, and I choose only those which are somehow related to the topics I discussed before in connection with Ibn al-Muqaffa'. There is the problem of explaining the existence of Evil. Dualism had ceased to be a danger; Ibn ar-Rawandi probably never met any single Manichean in Baghdad, and every Mu'tazilite adhered to *tauhid*, monotheism, the belief in one God. But the question remained why there is human suffering if there is only one God who is just and directs the world. In the beginning some theologians had tried to find a solution by assuming that God does not know the future, for if He does not know the things to come, especially the actions performed by human beings, He cannot predestinate them. Man is then free to act as he wants; God only reacts afterwards by rewarding or punishing him. God does not know

beforehand what is going to happen; so if some evil is done on earth it is always man who is responsible for it. Of course God knows everything; this is said in the Quran. But this does not necessarily include the future, for the Quran says that God knows *kull shay'*, and *shay'* is only something which exists whereas future things or actions do not yet exist, but are simply nothing. I referred to this kind of theology yesterday; it was propagated by some early thinkers in the Shia and elsewhere. The Mu'tazilites did not accept this argumentation. They believed in God's wisdom which brings order into the universe. God has a plan; otherwise He would not have been able to create the world. Therefore He knows beforehand what He is going to do; as a creator he has to know the future rather than the past. At this point of the discussion Ibn ar-Rawandi seems to have interfered. He accepted the statement that God has a plan, but drew an unexpected new conclusion from it: If He has a plan right from the beginning this plan is eternal because knowing everything is an eternal attribute in God's essence. But if He knows the world from eternity He also wills it from eternity, and then the world is eternal itself.

This was a conclusion based on Aristotelian ideas. Aristotle had discussed the question in detail; even the problem of the future contingents, i.e. things happening in the time to come, can already be found in his writings. Arabic philosophy was in its primary stage; when Ibn ar-Rawandi stayed in Baghdad al Kindi, the first Arab philosopher (*failasuf al-'Arab*), lived at the Abbasid court as a tutor to the princes. Kindi, however, did not believe in the eternity of the world; he was an Aristotelian in many respects, but not in this point. Nor did Ibn ar-Rawandi quote Aristotle. From what we find in the sources we may conclude that he did not mention Aristotle's name at all. He knew that the Baghdadi theologians could not accept the eternity of the world, and perhaps he did not believe in it himself, but he wanted to make them understand that they were still on the wrong track. Or perhaps even less than that: he may have simply wanted to tell them that the question could not be decided. The Quran said that God had created Heaven and earth, but not *when* God had done so nor that He had created the world from nothing. There is no statement about that in the Bible either. In the Book of Genesis we only hear that before the world there was chaos; creation amounted to bringing order into chaos. It is true that the doctrine of the creation from

nothing had been developed in the meantime, especially by Christian theologians. But in Islam the discussion was just about to start, and Ibn ar-Rawandi's objection was only one of its first steps.

Ibn ar-Rawandi's clash with the Baghdadi theologians deepened when the controvery shifted to prophecy, i.e. to the second part of the *shahada*, after the *La ilaha illa llah*. Everybody in Iraq and Iran knew that there were religions which could do without a prophet. In Basra the Muslims met with Indian merchants who had sailed through the Persian Gulf and where sometimes accompanied by Buddhist monks whom the Arabs called Sumaniyya or Shamaniyya, from the Indian word *s̲ramana* which meant "monk". These *s̲ramana* were in a way similar to Muslim *zuhhad* or Christian monks but they did not believe in a personal God who could have sent a messenger (*rasul*) to mankind; the Buddha was to them simply a wise man, and he had never thought of creating a new society by way of a Book or a Scripture. For the Muslims this was a decisive difference; they had the Quran, and the Quran was a kind of constitution for their society. This implied that the "Book" (*al-kitab*) was beyond criticism, a document of divine origin whose statements could not be put to doubt. But why is it, said Ibn ar-Rawandi, that we are promised a Paradise in which flow milk and honey? Who wants to drink fresh milk? Only Bedouins do so; a man of good taste prefers yoghurt or sour milk. This sounds like a joke. But what Ibn ar-Rawandi wanted to say was probably that the Quran had been addressed to certain people, and that times had changed; the inhabitants of a metropolis like Baghdad had a different way of life than the Bedouins of the Arabian peninsula.

And there were, of course, more serious questions. The Quran prescribes or recommends that animals be sacrificed on certain occasions, e. g. during the Hajj. But how does this go together with the prohibition of killing? This was a "constitutional" question, much debated at that time, and Ibn ar-Rawandi reacted like a modern defender of animal rights. Or, attacking the principle as such: Why did God send a prophet at all if He foresaw how much resistance He would encounter? Would it not have been better to send an angel? An angel who appears with a sword is obeyed by everybody. And finally, coming to the core of the problem: Does man not have a messenger in himself, namely reason? Why do we need a revelation since we

have a brain, i.e. our intelligence which we were given by God? For if human reason tells us the same things which are found in the "Book", the Scripture, revelation is not necessary. But if revelation does *not* correspond to what we know by reason it is evidently wrong. There are, of course, prescriptions which are simply there, by the authority of the Prophet, like praying five times a day (and not four or six times). But how do we recognize that somebody is a prophet and not a swindler, a *mutanabbi'* like Musailima? Who or what obliges us to believe in the Quran?

These were serious, if somewhat impertinent questions. They pertained to an atmosphere of scepticism or intellectual uncertainty which could easily emerge in a society where different religions lived side by side. Among the Baghdadi Mu'tazilites we find similar ideas in a group of people who are called in one of our sources "sufiyyat al-Mu'tazila"; I mentioned them already yesterday. They were Sufis insofar as they lived apart from the bourgeois world of the capital; they did not engage in trade (*tahrim al-makasib* was the term used at the time; we would say: they were against capitalism), and they did not have any connections with the government. Some of them were critical of the life-style of the Prophet; they found him too worldly, compared to Jesus for instance. In contrast to Jesus, they said, Muhammad had married; he liked perfume and he was sensual. And they did not trust the rationality their colleagues were so proud of; they possessed a book called *K. al-Jaruf*, "The Book of the Torrent" where allegedly all confidence in reason was washed away. It was with these people that Ibn ar-Rewandi established contacts when he came to Baghdad; as a foreigner he needed a place where to stay or where he could teach. We are told that he had relatives in town; so he could also have lived with them. But perhaps he expected more, a milieu which corresponded to his scholarly interests.

For it seems that here, among the *sufiyyat al-Mu'tazila*, he met the other person whom I mentioned before: Abu 'Isa al-Warraq, a man who, in some respect, was an outcast among the normal Mu'tazilites like himself. I shall talk about him only briefly. He earned his living by copying books, as a *warraq*, a publisher as we would say today. As a type, he was different from Ibn ar-Rawandi, not ironical or sarcastic but deeply learned, a real scholar. He had written a refutation of the

Christians where he expounded their doctrine of trinity and incarnation in great detail. Parts of the book are still preserved, and they have been edited some years ago. But he had done the same thing with Manicheism, again as objectively as possible; Ibn an-Nadim still used his exposé in his *Fihrist*. Abu ʻIsa described Manicheism in the way it had presented itself in Iraq when the persecution broke out: as an enlightened religion, rational and purified, apt for intellectuals. This cost him his reputation; there were people who pretended that he was a Manichean himself. This was certainly not true; he was simply a good historian. But he was a Shii, and therefore he looked suspicious to all those Sunni Muʻtazilites who, like Jahiz, did not trust Hisham b. al-Hakam and others of this ilk. Ibn ar-Rawandi seems to have warned him, and they both discussed Manicheism, a matter of which Ibn ar-Rawandi may not have understood much. And it is at this point that all of a sudden we discover Ibn ar-Rawandi, the great *zindiq*, as a positive theologian; in the presence of Abu ʻIsa he defends Islam against Manicheism.

This is at least what we can derive from a few reports which we find in the *K. at-Tauhīd* written by Maturidi, a man who lived deep down in Central Asia, in a village near Samarqand. But there are more indications to such a conclusion. Ibn ar-Rawandi is said to have written refutations of his own scandalous books. It is true that nothing of this has shown up until now, but if these refutations ever existed they were probably written in Iran. They may serve as a proof for his having been a mere dialectician, a man who liked to make his colleagues confused. In Iran his theology survived; we know that again through Maturidi. The *K. at-Tauhīd* preserves traces of a theory of prophecy developed by Ibn ar-Rawandi. If these reports can be trusted we have to assume that, in contrast to what we heard before, he did not doubt the necessity of prophethood; he rather believed that the prophets were the founders of civilization because they taught mankind things which would otherwise not have been invented. Adam, who is a prophet according to Islamic belief, was the first person to use language; later prophets invented agriculture, music etc. This was an interesting theory; there was a lot of discussion about it. Ultimately it was not convincing, and Maturidi does not accept it either. But it may show once more that Ibn ar-Rawandi was not the *zindiq* later generations wanted to see in him.

Does this mean that the old scepticism had disappeared? Not at all; we have at least one more example, a famous person who even acquired a high reputation in medieval Europe: the physician Abu Bakr ar-Razi who lived around 900, later than Ibn ar-Rawandi and in a different environment. For some time he directed a hospital in Baghdad, but he came from Rayy, an old town in Iran (near modern Tehran) which had a different intellectual climate. The Mu'tazilites were not so important there; the masses rather followed the *ashab al-hadith* who at that time were represented by well-known scholars (all of them called ar-Razi). They had their own concept of prophethood; Muhammad was primarily a man who had performed miracles, and his Hadith was, like the Quran, a guide to the right way of life. Abu Bakr ar-Razi did not agree with that. As a physician he was deeply immerged in Greek tradition, and the ideal of his ethics was not Muhammad but Socrates. Razi had developed a philosophical system of his own where God was not the creator but simply one of five eternal principles. He did not trust the prophets because he thought that, by performing miracles, they had deceived or duped those who followed them; they should have used rational arguments instead. In this respect Moses, Jesus and Muhammad were all alike; they were far from being cultural heroes as Ibn ar-Rawandi had believed. Razi came to the conclusion that all religions had gone astray. They contradicted each other: Christians pretended that Jesus was God's son; the Jews said that this was a lie, and the Muslims believed that Jesus was just a normal human being. The Zoroastrians and the Manicheans were in no way better, for who is going to believe in two Gods? Razi was not sarcastic like Ibn ar-Rawandi, nor was he a mere dialectician; he was dead serious. The time of religion is gone, he said. He was a real free-thinker.

But this was not the reason why people remembered him later on; he would have been forgotten if he had not been such a good physician. In his hospital he worked for the upper class, and he did not care about the gap which separated him from the masses. He did not want to abolish Islam; he simply thought that no religion had any advantage over another one, and he did not believe that the theologians were able to find the ultimate truth. The *mutakallimun* had started defending Islam when scepticism was already strong, in Iran at least, and people like Ibn ar-Rawandi had shown that the arguments developed in *kalam* did not yet deserve much confidence. The

plurality of Near Eastern religions, together with Greek philosophy, left a lot of space for personal decisions and all sorts of a personal religious crisis. The reaction had not to be as haughty as in the case of ar-Razi. We have another testimony which is much more moderate, a story which Abu Hayyan at-Tauhidi pretends to have heard about an Iranian sceptic, a *mutahayyir* as he says, somebody who had lost his orientation but did not want to give up his obligation to the religion into which he had been born. Let us listen to him for a moment. "My situation", he said, "can be compared to somebody who entered a caravanseray on a bright day in order to find some shadow. The master of the caravanseray gave him a room without asking whether he liked it or not. But then all of a sudden it started raining, and water began dripping into the room. He looked whether there was any accomodation better than his, but only discovered that the rain was getting through everywhere. Moreover, if he wanted to change the room he would have been forced to cross the court-yard which had become muddy because of the water. Therefore he decided to stay where he was; so he would have peace and not soil his feet. – This is how I am related to religion. I was born into it, and my parents did not give me a choice; if I change I won't win anything."

This is an interesting text, full of resignation and perhaps wisdom. We are not able to find ultimate truth in religion, it says; therefore conversion or missionary activity do not make sense. This corresponds, in a way, to Abu Bakr ar-Razi's conclusion. But Razi's aggressiveness is gone: no criticism of the prophets and tolerance instead of rationalist arrogance. Is this an Islamic variety of enlightenment, more than 700 years before Europe invented the term? It would have been an enlightenment emerging out of scepticism, closer to 'Umar Khayyam than to Voltaire. For the generation of Abu Hayyan at-Tauhidi *kalam* seemed to have lost all its persuasiveness; reason does not win against revelation. This was, of course, not the end of the story; we have been dealing with individual thinkers, not with a movement which changed the mood of an entire civilization. There will be, a few centuries later, in Iran theologians like Abu l-Husayn al-Basri (among the Mu'tazilites) or Fakhraddin ar-Razi (among the Ash'arites) who initiate an age of absolute rationality, and in Arabic Spain a philosopher who believes that human mind is able to discover the entire message of Islam without being assisted by revelation: Ibn Tufayl with his *Hayy b. Yaqzān*. Abu Bakr

ar-Razi's disqualification of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad was taken up by the Qaramita in Bahrayn who hoped that the Mahdi will establish a new spiritual religion which goes beyond Judaism, Christianity and Islam. And part of it appeared then again in Western enlightenment. Ibn Tufayl's Hayy b. Yaqzan was translated into Latin and published under the title *Philosophus autodidactus*, which means "The Philosopher who taught himself", by Edward Pococke, one of the first European orientalists, in Oxford in 1671. At about the same time Razi's attack against the three prophets circulated in the form of a saying attributed to the Christian emperor Frederick II from Sicily, the man who, during the Crusades, dared conclude a treaty with al-Malik al-Kamil from Egypt concerning Jerusalem – again in Latin and as the title of a whole book: *De tribus impostoribus,* "The three impostors" who led mankind the wrong way. Western enlightenment liked radical solutions. In Islam they did not not have a chance.

But Europe is not my topic. In the Islamic world theology, when it had reached its most rational form, during the Mongol period, was confronted with another spiritual force which appealed to the believing masses in a much stronger way: Islamic mysticism in its collective form, the *tariqa*s. There we are far away from enlightenment. Religious criticism was not dead, though, not even in mysticism. We find it in 'Attar's poetry, for instance, with regard to all the social injustice prevailing in this world. But it appears under the cover of little stories and is formulated by fools who complain that God won't interfere and that He leaves injustice as it is. In the coffeehouses of 19th century Cairo people told stories of this sort which they ascribed to a fool by the name of Ibn ar-Rawandi; a German traveller, Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, noticed it with some astonishment. Both *kalam* and *tasauwuf* were then swept away, at the end of this same 19th century, by the reform movements which were proud of going back to the roots, i.e. the Quran and the time of the Prophet. Muhammad was understood now as a man who had been sent by God in order to found an ideal society on the basis of divine law incorporated in a divine book, the Quran. This was a concept of prophecy which, in some respects, was new and revolutionary. The theologians had not put so much emphasis on the Prophet, and for the mystics he had been the *insān al-kāmil*, an ideal personality who had come into existence before the world. Now Muhammad was a historical figure, a

hero as Thomas Carlyle said when he put Muhammad on the same level as Luther and Cromwell. But the Egyptian reformers, people like Muhammad ʻAbduh or Rashid Rida, had not read Carlyle. Carlyle wrote in English and was read only by Indian Muslims. The reformers in Egypt knew French, and they read (or had at least heard about) Auguste Comte. And with the philosophy of Comte we come again close to our topic which is enlightenment. Comte called his way of thinking "positivism", and his attitude towards religion reflected the tradition of enlightenment in its French variety. He pretended that the age of religion was over, and that mankind, i.e. European mankind had entered the age of science. The religion he had in mind was, of course, Christianity or the Catholic Church which had been hit so hard by the French Revolution. The Egyptian reformers had nothing against this statement, for they were convinced that Islam was different. French Christendom had lost the battle against enlightenment because it had based its doctrine on miracles, events which could not be proved, like resurrection. The Quran, on the contrary, did not contain miracles; it was based on reason (*ʻaql*). Muhammad had created the ideal society; by doing this he had initiated the age of science.

Turkey has inherited from French enlightenment its concept of laïcité. I do not know how you think about this nowadays. It would be a topic by itself, and I am not a specialist of it. I only know that in Germany the relationship between religion and state is not defined according the concept of laïcité. Nor did Germany ever side with August Comte; up to now "positivism" has a bad sound in German philosophical terminology. Instead of a harsh rejection of religion (because of its alledged irrationality) we have a historical and philological criticism of religious texts based on hermeneutics. Nobody pretends that this is a solution to all problems, but at least it is an alternative. Those of you who come to Germany in order to teach or simply to live with German citizens of Turkish origin may find there a possibility to deal with the Quran without destroying any belief right away. And perhaps it is also a way of solving the problems raised by those people whom we use to call *zanadiqa*. But I leave the decision to you.