

SCIENCE AND RELIGION IN ISLAM: THE LINK.

<http://gonashgo.blogspot.com/>

This blog contains my thoughts on the above, reflecting the tradition of Shia Ismaili Islam: The material universe is part of the structure of truth, the ultimate nature of which it is the goal of religion to reach(monoreality). Among other things this blog asks two questions, what is the universe made up of and how does it operate? The answer to these questions finds its way onto a continuum of knowledge ranging from rationally-acquired knowledge to transcendental knowledge of the divine

400)Blogpost Four Hundred, Knowledge, Intellect, Creation, Science and Religion: Comprehensive Quotes of Aga Khan IV and Others; a never-ending post..

THIS IS MY 400TH post and is also the central post of my blog, now entitled Blogpost Four Hundred. It is continually being updated and the last update was blogpost 327 from February 15th 2008. The quotes and excerpts of Mawlana Hazar Imam, Aga Khan IV, his predecessor Imam Aga Khan III, other Imams, cosmologist-philosopher-theologian-poets in Ismaili history and others, on the subjects of knowledge, intellect, creation, science and religion form the doctrinal underpinning of my blog on the link between science and religion in Islam. In the Shia Ismaili Muslim tradition we always have a living Imam to guide us and so this list of quotes and excerpts will always be updated when relevant information becomes available. It is, as the title aptly says, a never-ending post:

"IT AFFIRMS OUR INTENT to share, within a western setting, the best of Islamic life and heritage. This new Delegation of the Ismaili Imam, like the Ismaili Centre and the Aga Khan Museum to be built in Toronto, reflects our conviction that buildings can do more than simply house people and programmes. They can also reflect our deepest values, as great architecture captures esoteric thought in physical form.

When I invited Professor Maki, a master of form and light, to design this building, I made a suggestion to him - one that I hoped would help connect this place symbolically to the Faith of Islam. The suggestion I made focused on creating a certain mystique, centred around the beautiful mysteries of rock crystal.

Why rock crystal? Because of its translucency, its multiple planes, and the fascination of its colours - all of which present themselves differently as light moves around them. The hues of rock crystal are subtle, striking and widely varied - for they can be clear or milky, white, or rose coloured, or smoky, or golden, or black.

It is because of these qualities that rock crystal seems to be such an appropriate symbol of the

profound beauty and the ever-unfolding mystery of Creation itself – and the Creator. As the Holy Quran so powerfully affirms, “Allah is the Creator and the Master of the heavens and the earth.” And then it continues: “Everything in the heavens and on earth, and everything between them, and everything beneath the soil, belongs to Him.”

But in Islamic thought, as in this building, beauty and mystery are not separated from intellect - in fact, the reverse is true. As we use our intellect to gain new knowledge about Creation, we come to see even more profoundly the depth and breadth of its mysteries. We explore unknown regions beneath the seas - and in outer space. We reach back over hundreds of millions of years in time. Extra-ordinary fossilised geological specimens seize our imagination - palm leaves, amethyst flowers, hedgehog quartz, sea lilies, chrysanthemum and a rich panoply of shells. Indeed, these wonders are found beneath the very soil on which we tread - in every corner of the world - and they connect us with far distant epochs and environments.

And the more we discover, the more we know, the more we penetrate just below the surface of our normal lives - the more our imagination staggers. Just think for example what might lie below the surfaces of celestial bodies all across the far flung reaches of our universe. What we feel, even as we learn, is an ever-renewed sense of wonder, indeed, a powerful sense of awe – and of Divine inspiration.

Using rock crystal’s iridescent mystery as an inspiration for this building, does indeed provide an appropriate symbol of the Timelessness, the Power and the Mystery of Allah as the Lord of Creation.

What we celebrate today can thus be seen as a new creative link between the spiritual dimensions of Islam and the cultures of the West. Even more particularly, it represents another new bridge between the peoples of Islam and the peoples of Canada”(Aga Khan IV, Ottawa, Canada, December 6th 2008)

"THE FIRST IS THE CENTRALITY of quality education as an element in the Islamic tradition. It is appropriate that I highlight this matter today, for Bangladesh is the first Muslim country in which we have laid a new Academy foundation stone..... World and faith are inseparable in Islam. Faith and learning are also profoundly interconnected. The Holy Qur'an sees the discovery of knowledge as a spiritual responsibility, enabling us to better understand and more ably serve God's creation. Our traditional teachings remind us of our individual obligation to seek knowledge unto the ends of the earth - and of our social obligation to honor and nurture the full potential of every human life..... The beauty of Creation is a function of its variety. A fully homogenized world would be far less attractive and interesting."(Aga Khan IV, May 20th 2008, Dhaka, Bangladesh)

"....AND SHOULD'NT IB SCIENCE STUDENTS not learn about Ibn al-Haytham, the Muslim scholar who developed modern optics, as well as his predecessors Euclid and Ptolemy, whose ideas he challenged.... The legacy which I am describing actually goes back more than a thousand years, to the time when our forefathers, the Fatimid Imam-Caliphs of Egypt, founded

Al-Azhar University and the Academy of Knowledge in Cairo. For many centuries, a commitment to learning was a central element in far-flung Islamic cultures. That commitment has continued in my own Imamatus through the founding of the Aga Khan University and the University of Central Asia and through the recent establishment of a new Aga Khan Academies Program."(Aga Khan IV, "The Peterson Lecture" on the International Baccalaureate, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, 18 April 2008)

"The United States' position as a world leader, in my view, grows directly out of its accomplishments as a Knowledge Society - and this Knowledge - rightly applied - can continue to be a resource of enormous global value"(Aga Khan IV, Austin, Texas, USA, 12 April 2008)

"First, the globalisation of the knowledge of the cultures of the Umma is critical. We have to make known the cultural inheritance of the Muslims to the non-Muslim as well as the Muslim parts of the world because we will never succeed in building the respect and recognition that the Umma deserves unless we present the Umma as a remarkable carrier of civilisation. The misconceptions about Islam and Muslims in the West exist because we are, even today, absent from the global civilisation. We should encourage the Western education system to bring in knowledge of the civilisation of Islam into the secondary education system. I am thrilled with the initiative that Dubai and other states in the Gulf are taking by creating museums. Retracing our historical legacies and bringing them back in the modern world is extremely important."(Aga Khan IV, Interview with Gulf News, Dubai, UAE, April 2008)

"The spirit of Islam is to share knowledge and I always tell the community not to think in material terms. Think in terms of knowledge and think what you can offer our institutions in various parts of the world. Raise our performance in healthcare, education, financial services and in civil society. Many minorities from the Middle East countries are living in the West. Just think how wonderful it would be if young women and men return to their respective countries to strengthen institutions and do voluntary work for their countries."(Aga Khan IV, Interview with Gulf News, Dubai, UAE, April 2008)

"The second great historical lesson to be learnt is that the Muslim world has always been wide open to every aspect of human existence. The sciences, society, art, the oceans, the environment and the cosmos have all contributed to the great moments in the history of Muslim civilisations. The Qur'an itself repeatedly recommends Muslims to become better educated in order better to understand God's creation"(Closing Address by His Highness Aga Khan IV at the "Musée-Musées" Round Table Louvre Museum, Paris, France, October 17th 2007)

".....The Quran tells us that signs of Allah's Sovereignty are found in the contemplation of His Creation - in the heavens and the earth, the night and the day, the clouds and the seas, the winds and the waters...."(Aga Khan IV, Kampala, Uganda, August 22 2007)

"....in Islam, but particularly Shia Islam, the role of the intellect is part of faith. That intellect is what separates man from the rest of the physical world in which he lives.....This notion of the capacity of the human intellect to understand and to admire the creation of Allah will bring you happiness in your everyday lives. Of that I am certain"(Aga Khan IV, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, August 17th 2007)

"Parts of the Ummah are concerned about the relationship between Muslims and the contemporary knowledge society, which is now principally rooted in the West. It is my deepest conviction, my deepest conviction, that we must make that knowledge society our own, in keeping with the Alid tradition towards the intellect, but always doing so within the ethics of our faith. Thus, I have sought from my Jamat your Nazrana of time and knowledge."(Aga Khan IV, Paris, France, July 11th 2007)

"That quest for a better life, among Muslims and non-Muslims alike, must lead inevitably to the Knowledge Society which is developing in our time. The great and central question facing the Ummah of today is how it will relate to the Knowledge Society of tomorrow. The fundamental reason for the pre-eminence of Islamic civilizations lay neither in accidents of history nor in acts of war, but rather in their ability to discover new knowledge, to make it their own, and to build constructively upon it. They became the Knowledge Societies of their time."(Aga Khan IV, Speech, 2nd December 2006, Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan)

"For century after century, the Arabs, the Persians, the Turks and many other Islamic societies achieved powerful leadership roles in the world—not only politically and economically but also intellectually. Some ill-informed historians and biased commentators have tried to argue that these successes were essentially produced by military power, but this view is profoundly incorrect"(Aga Khan IV, 2nd December 2006, Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan)

"Of the Abrahamic faiths, Islam is probably the one that places the greatest emphasis on knowledge. The purpose is to understand God's creation, and therefore it is a faith which is eminently logical. Islam is a faith of reason"(Aga Khan IV, Spiegel Magazine interview, Germany, Oct 9th 2006)

"Astronomy, the so-called "Science of the Universe" was a field of particular distinction in Islamic civilization—in sharp contrast to the weakness of Islamic countries in the field of Space research today. In this field, as in others, intellectual leadership is never a static condition, but something which is always shifting and always dynamic"(Aga Khan IV, Convocation, American University of Cairo, Cairo, Egypt, June 15th 2006)

"A great risk to the modernization of the Islamic world is identity loss — the blind assumption

that we should give up all our essential values and cultural expressions to those of other civilizations. In order to contain this risk, for it cannot be totally eliminated, we must re-invigorate our own value systems and cultural expressions. This includes the sciences and the ethical structures that go with them, but also architecture and the design of landscape and towns, literature, music, philosophical thought, and the free space they require, which are unfailing signs of a nation's vitality and confidence"(Aga KhanIV, Aga Khan University , 3 December 2005, Karachi, Pakistan)

"Our interpretation of Islam places enormous value on knowledge. Knowledge is the reflection of faith if it is used properly. Seek out that knowledge and use it properly"(Aga Khan IV, Toronto, Canada, 8th June 2005)

"A thousand years ago, my forefathers, the Fatimid imam-caliphs of Egypt, founded al-Azhar University and the Academy of Knowledge in Cairo. In the Islamic tradition, they viewed the discovery of knowledge as a way to understand, so as to serve better God's creation, to apply knowledge and reason to build society and shape human aspirations"(Aga Khan IV, Speech, 25th June 2004, Matola, Mozambique.)

"Quran Symposium:....a reflection of how Islam's revelation, with its challenge to man's innate gift of quest and reason, became a powerful impetus for a new flowering of human civilisation.This programme is also an opportunity for achieving insights into how the discourse of the Qur'an-e-Sharif, rich in parable and allegory, metaphor and symbol, has been an inexhaustible well-spring of inspiration, lending itself to a wide spectrum of interpretations.In this context, would it not also be relevant to consider how, above all, it has been the Qur'anic notion of the universe as an expression of Allah's will and creation that has inspired, in diverse Muslim communities, generations of artists, scientists and philosophers? Scientific pursuits, philosophic inquiry and artistic endeavour are all seen as the response of the faithful to the recurring call of the Qur'an to ponder the creation as a way to understand Allah's benevolent majesty. As Sura al-Baqara proclaims: 'Wherever you turn, there is the face of Allah'.The famous verse of 'light' in the Qur'an, the Ayat al-Nur, whose first line is rendered here in the mural behind me, inspires among Muslims a reflection on the sacred, the transcendent. It hints at a cosmos full of signs and symbols that evoke the perfection of Allah's creation and mercy"(Aga Khan IV,Speech, Institute of Ismaili Studies, October 2003, London, U.K.)

"Several days ago, at a meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference in Malaysia, it was pointed out that the only way the umma can work its way out of its present sad state is to harness the intellect"(Aga Khan IV, Speech, Institute of Ismaili Studies, October 2003, London, U.K.)

"In the ebb and flow of history, "knowledge is a shield against the blows of time". It dispels "the torment of ignorance" and nourishes "peace to blossom forth in the soul"."(Aga Khan IV quoting Nasir Khusraw, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, August 30, 2003)

"What does it (the West) know about the Islamic world? Is anything taught in secondary education? Does anybody know the names of the great philosophers, the scientists, the great theologians? Do they even know the names of the great civilizations?"(Aga Khan IV, Interview, 2nd Feb. 2002)

"The faith of a billion people is not part of the general education process in the West - ignored by school and college curricula in history, the sciences, philosophy and geography"(Aga Khan IV, Speech, 2002)

"The basic problem is the enormous lack of knowledge of the Islamic world in the general world-culture. It's a rather remarkable thing and a very sad thing to me, that over a billion people, their 1400 year history, of civilizations, are simply not part of general education in the general Western world. It's a remarkable knowledge gap"(Aga Khan IV, Interview, 2002)

"In sum the process of creation can be said to take place at several levels. Ibda represents the initial level - one transcends history, the other creates it. The spiritual and material realms are not dichotomous, since in the Ismaili formulation, matter and spirit are united under a higher genus and each realm possesses its own hierarchy. Though they require linguistic and rational categories for definition, they represent elements of a whole, and a true understanding of God must also take account of His creation. Such a synthesis is crucial to how the human intellect eventually relates to creation and how it ultimately becomes the instrument for penetrating through history the mystery of the unknowable God implied in the formulation of tawhid."(Azim Nanji, Director, Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, U.K., 1998)

"The Muslim world, once a remarkable bastion of scientific and humanist knowledge, a rich and self-confident cradle of culture and art, has never forgotten its past. The great Muslim philosopher al-Kindi wrote eleven hundred years ago, "No one is diminished by the truth, rather does the truth ennoble all". That is no less true today"(Aga Khan IV, Speech, 1996, Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.A.)

"From the seventh century to the thirteenth century, the Muslim civilizations dominated world culture, accepting, adopting, using and preserving all preceding study of mathematics, philosophy, medicine and astronomy, among other areas of learning. The Islamic field of thought and knowledge included and added to much of the information on which all civilisations are founded. And yet this fact is seldom acknowledged today, be it in the West or in the Muslim world, and this amnesia has left a six hundred year gap in the history of human thought"(Aga Khan IV, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, USA, 1996)

"The Quran very often refers to nature as a reflection of Allah's power of creation and says: Look at the mountains, look at the rivers, look at the trees, look at the flowers all as evidence of Allah's love for the people whom He has created. Today I look at this environment and I say that I believe that Allah is smiling upon you, may His smile always be upon you"(Aga Khan IV, Khorog, Tajikistan, May 27th 1995)

"Education has been important to my family for a long time. My forefathers founded al-Azhar University in Cairo some 1000 years ago, at the time of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt. Discovery of knowledge was seen by those founders as an embodiment of religious faith, and faith as reinforced by knowledge of workings of the Creator's physical world. The form of universities has changed over those 1000 years, but that reciprocity between faith and knowledge remains a source of strength"(Aga Khan IV, 27th May 1994, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.)

"The Muslim world, once a remarkable bastion of scientific and humanist knowledge, a rich and self-confident cradle of culture and art, has never forgotten its past"(Aga Khan IV, 27th May 1994, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.)

"The great Muslim philosopher al-Kindi wrote eleven hundred years ago, "No one is diminished by the truth, rather does the truth ennoble us all"(Aga Khan IV, 27th May 1994, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.)

"An institution dedicated to proceeding beyond known limits must be committed to independent thinking. In a university scholars engage both orthodox and unorthodox ideas, seeking truth and understanding wherever they may be found. That process is often facilitated by an independent governance structure, which serves to ensure that the university adheres to its fundamental mission and is not pressured to compromise its work for short-term advantage. For a Muslim university it is appropriate to see learning and knowledge as a continuing acknowledgement of Allah's magnificence"(Aga Khan IV, Speech, 1993, Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan)

"Science is a wonderful, powerful tool and research budgets are essential. But Science is only the beginning in the new age we are entering. Islam does not perceive the world as two separate domains of mind and spirit, science and belief. Science and the search for knowledge are an expression of man's designated role in the universe, but they do not define that role totally....."(Aga Khan IV, McMaster University Convocation, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, May 15th 1987)

"The Divine Intellect, Aql-i Kull, both transcends and informs the human intellect. It is this Intellect which enables man to strive towards two aims dictated by the faith: that he should reflect upon the environment Allah has given him and that he should know himself. It is the Light of the Intellect which distinguishes the complete human being from the human animal, and

developing that intellect requires free inquiry. The man of faith, who fails to pursue intellectual search is likely to have only a limited comprehension of Allah's creation. Indeed, it is man's intellect that enables him to expand his vision of that creation"(Aga Khan IV, Aga Khan University Inauguration Speech, Karachi, Pakistan, November 11, 1985)

"The Holy Qu'ran's encouragement to study nature and the physical world around us gave the original impetus to scientific enquiry among Muslims. Exchanges of knowledge between institutions and nations and the widening of man's intellectual horizons are essentially Islamic concepts. The Faith urges freedom of intellectual enquiry and this freedom does not mean that knowledge will lose its spiritual dimension. That dimension is indeed itself a field for intellectual enquiry. I can not illustrate this interdependence of spiritual inspiration and learning better than by recounting a dialogue between Ibn Sina, the philosopher, and Abu Said Abu -Khyar, the Sufi mystic. Ibn Sina remarked, "Whatever I know, he sees". To which Abu Said replied, " Whatever I see, he knows"."(Aga Khan IV, Aga Khan University Inauguration Speech, Karachi, Pakistan, November 11th 1985)

“Muslims believe in an all-encompassing unit of man and nature. To them there is no fundamental division between the spiritual and the material while the whole world, whether it be the earth, sea or air, or the living creatures that inhabit them, is an expression of God’s creation.”(Aga Khan IV, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, USA, 13 April 1984)

About the United States of America: "I'm less hypnotized by this country's material wealth than by its wealth of knowledge. This country today represents, without any doubt in my mind, the greatest intensity of human knowledge on the face of the earth. And that is an exhilarating thought, one perhaps not perceived by Americans as much as by non-Americans"(Aga Khan IV, LIFE magazine interview, December 1983)

"Above all, following the guidance of the Holy Quran, there was freedom of enquiry and research. The result was a magnificent flowering of artistic and intellectual activity throughout the ummah" (Aga Khan IV, Aga Khan University, 16 March 1983, Karachi, Pakistan)

"One of the first and greatest research centres, the Bayt al-Hikmah established in Baghdad in 830, led Islam in translating philosophical and scientific works from Greek, Roman, Persian and Indian classics. By the art of translation, learning was assimilated from other civilizations"(Aga Khan IV, Aga Khan University, 16 March 1983, Karachi, Pakistan)

"It is no exaggeration to say that the original Christian universities of Latin West, at Paris, Bologna and Oxford, indeed the whole European renaissance, received a vital influx of new knowledge from Islam -- an influx from which the later western colleges and universities, including those of North Africa, were to benefit in turn"(Aga Khan IV, 16 March 1983, Aga

Khan UNiversity, Karachi, Pakistan)

"The truth, as the famous Islamic scholars repeatedly told their students, is that the spirit of disciplined, objective enquiry is the property of no single culture, but of all humanity. To quote the great physician and philosopher, Ibn Sina: "My profession is to be forever journeying, to travel about the universe so that I may know all its conditions." "(Aga Khan IV, Aga Khan University, 16 March 1983, Karachi, Pakistan)

"In Islamic belief, knowledge is two-fold. There is that revealed through the Holy Prophet (s.a.s.) and that which man discovers by virtue of his own intellect. Nor do these two involve any contradiction, provided man remembers that his own mind is itself the creation of God. Without this humility, no balance is possible. With it, there are no barriers"(Aga Khan IV, 16 March 1983, Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan)

"Indeed, one strength of Islam has always lain in its belief that creation is not static but continuous, that through scientific and other endeavours, God has opened and continues to open new windows for us to see the marvels of His creation"(Aga Khan IV, Aga Khan University, 16 March 1983, Karachi, Pakistan)

"It (Surah of Light from the Quran) tells us that the oil of the blessed olive tree lights the lamp of understanding, a light that belongs neither to the East nor West. We are to give this light to all. In that spirit, all that we learn will belong to the world and that too is part of the vision I share with you"(Aga Khan IV, Speech, 25 Sept. 1979)

"The tapestry of Islamic history is studded with jewels of civilization; these jewels poured forth their light and beauty; great statesmen, great philosophers, great doctors, great astronomers; but these individuals, these precious stones were worked into a tapestry, whose dominant theme was Islam, and this theme remained dominant regardless of the swallowing up of foreign lands, foreign cultures, foreign languages and foreign people"(Aga Khan IV, 30 Jan 1970, Hyderabad, Pakistan)

"Our religious leadership must be acutely aware of secular trends, including those generated by this age of science and technology. Equally, our academic or secular elite must be deeply aware of Muslim history, of the scale and depth of leadership exercised by the Islamic empire of the past in all fields"(Aga Khan IV, 6th February 1970, Hyderabad, Pakistan)

"God has given us the miracle of life with all its attributes: the extraordinary manifestations of sunrise and sunset, of sickness and recovery, of birth and death, but surely if He has given us the means with which to remove ourselves from this world so as to go to other parts of the Universe,

we can but accept as further manifestations the creation and destructions of stars, the birth and death of atomic particles, the flighting new sound and light waves. I am afraid that the torch of intellectual discovery, the attraction of the unknown, the desire for intellectual self-perfection have left us"(Aga Khan IV,Speech, 1963, Mindanao, Phillipines)

"The origins of man's religious aspirations are to be found in what we nowadays call science. Those who have studied mythology and primitive psychology know that magic in various forms started various trains of thought in primitive man by which he achieved what seemed to him to be rational accounts of the natural phenomena he saw around him. It seemed to him rational that these phenomena, these events like the rising and the setting of the sun, the passage of the seasons, the flowering of the bud and the ripening of the fruit, the wind and the rain, were caused and controlled by deities or superior beings. Primitive religious experience and primitive scientific reasoning were linked together in magic, in wizardry. Thus, at one and the same time, mankind's experiences in the realm of sensation and his strivings to to explain and coordinate those experiences in terms of his mind led to the birth of both science and religion. The two remained linked throughout prehistoric and ancient times, and in the life of the early empires of which we have knowledge. It was difficult to separate what I may call proto-religion from proto-science; they made their journey like two streams, sometimes mingling, sometimes separating, but running side by side"(Memoirs of Aga Khan III, 1954)

"The creation according to Islam is not a unique act in a given time but a perpetual and constant event; and God supports and sustains all existence at every moment by His will and His thought. Outside His will, outside His thought, all is nothing, even the things which seem to us absolutely self-evident such as space and time. Allah alone wishes: the Universe exists; and all manifestations are as a witness of the Divine Will"(Memoirs of Aga Khan III, 1954)

"Islamic doctrine goes further than the other great religions, for it proclaims the presence of the soul, perhaps minute but nevertheless existing in an embryonic state, in all existence in matter, in animals, trees, and space itself. Every individual, every molecule, every atom has its own spiritual relationship with the All-Powerful Soul of God"(Memoirs of Aga Khan III, 1954)

"Thus there was an absolute need for the Divine Word's revelation, to Mohammed himself, a man like the others, of God's person and of his relations to the Universe which he had created. Once man has thus comprehended the essence of existence, there remains for him the duty, since he knows the absolute value of his own soul, of making for himself a direct path which will constantly lead his individual soul to and bind it with the universal Soul of which the Universe is, as much of it as we perceive with our limited visions, one of the infinite manifestations. Thus Islam's basic principle can only be defined as mono-realism and not as monotheism. Consider, for example, the opening declaration of every Islamic prayer: "Allah-o-Akbar". What does that mean? There can be no doubt that the second word of the declaration likens the character of Allah to a matrix which contains all and gives existence to the infinite, to space, to time, to the Universe, to all active and passive forces imaginable, to life and to the soul. Imam Hassan has

explained the Islamic doctrine of God and the Universe by analogy with the sun and its reflection in the pool of a fountain; there is certainly a reflection or image of the sun, but with what poverty and with what little reality; how small and pale is the likeness between this impalpable image and the immense, blazing, white-hot glory of the celestial sphere itself. Allah is the sun; and the Universe, as we know it in all its magnitude, and time, with its power, are nothing more than the reflection of the Absolute in the mirror of the fountain"(Memoirs of Aga Khan III, 1954)

Quote from a letter written by Our 48th Imam to a friend in 1952 under the title: 'What have we forgotten in Islam?': "Islam is fundamentally in its very nature a natural religion. Throughout the Quran God's signs (Ayats) are referred to as the natural phenomenon, the law and order of the universe, the exactitudes and consequences of the relations between natural phenomenon in cause and effect. Over and over, the stars, sun, moon, earthquakes, fruits of the earth and trees are mentioned as the signs of divine power, divine law and divine order. Even in the Ayeh of Noor, divine is referred to as the natural phenomenon of light and even references are made to the fruit of the earth. During the great period of Islam, Muslims did not forget these principles of their religion. Alas, Islam which is a natural religion in which God's miracles are the very law and order of nature drifted away and is still drifting away, even in Pakistan, from science which is the study of those very laws and orders of nature.....Islam is a natural religion of which the Ayats are the universe in which we live and move and have our being.....The God of the Quran is the one whose Ayats are the universe....."(Aga Khan III, April 4th 1952)

"The God of the Quran is the One whose Ayats(Signs) are the Universe in which we live, move and have our being"(Aga Khan III, April 4th 1952)

"Nature is the great daily book of God whose secrets must be found and used for the well-being of humanity"(Aga Khan III, Radio Pakistan, Karachi, Pakistan, February 19th 1950)

"My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God. "(Albert Einstein, circa 1950)

About Hafiz, the renowned Iranian poet:"Then came Hafiz - by far the greatest singer of the soul of man. In him we can find all the strivings, all the sorrow, all the victories and joys, all the hopes and disappointments of each and every one of us. In him we find contact, direct and immediate, with the outer universe interpreted as an infinite reality of matter, as a mirror of an eternal spirit, or indeed (as Spinoza later said) an absolute existence of which matter and spirit alike are but two of infinite modes and facets."(Inaugural Lecture Before the Iran Society by Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III, November 9, 1936 London, United Kingdom.)

"In fact this world is a book in which you see inscribed the writings of God the Almighty"(Nasir Khusraw, 11th century Ismaili cosmologist-philosopher-poet)

"The Intellect is the substance of (God's) unity and it is the one (al-wahid), both cause and caused, the act of origination (al-ibda) and the first originated being (al-mubda al-awwal); it is perfection and perfect, eternity and eternal, existence and that which exists all in a single substance"(Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani, 11th century Fatimid Ismaili cosmologist (Kitab al-Riyad, pp. 221-222))

"My profession is to be forever journeying, to travel about the Universe so that I may know all its conditions."(Ibn Sina, aka Avicenna, 11th century Muslim Philosopher, Physician and Scientist, author of the Canon of Medicine, circa 1037CE)

"Tarkib' is composition as in the compounding of elements in the process of making more complex things, that is, of adding together two things to form a synthesis, a compound. Soul composes in the sense of 'tarkib'; it is the animating force that combines the physical elements of the natural universe into beings that move and act. Incorporating is an especially apt word in this instance. It means to turn something into a body, as in 'composing'. But it is actually the conversion of an intellectual object, a thought, into a physical thing. Soul acts by incorporating reason into physical objects, the natural matter of the universe and all the things composed of it"(Abu Yakub Al-Sijistani, 10th century Fatimid Ismaili cosmologist, d971CE, from the book, 'Abu Yakub Al-Sijistani: Intellectual Missionary', by Paul Walker)

"God – may He be Glorified and Exalted – created Intellect ('aql) first among the spiritual entities; He drew it forth from the right of His Throne, making it proceed from His own Light. Then he commanded it to retreat, and it retreated, to advance, and it advanced; then God proclaimed: 'I created you glorious, and I gave you pre-eminence over all my creatures.'"(Imam Jafar as-Sadiq, Circa 765CE)

"The beginning of all things, their origin, their force and their prosperity, is that intellect ('aql), without which one can profit from nothing. God created it to adorn His creatures, and as a light for them. It is through intellect ('aql) that the servants recognize God is their Creator and that they themselves are created beings ...It is thanks to intellect ('aql) that they can distinguish what is beautiful from what is ugly, that they realize that darkness is in ignorance and that light is in Knowledge"(Imam Jafar as-Sadiq, (al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, Vol. 1, pp. 34), circa 765CE)

"No belief is like modesty and patience, no attainment is like humility, no honour is like knowledge, no power is like forbearance, and no support is more reliable than consultation"(Hazrat Ali, the first Imam of Shia Islam, circa 650CE)

Kathalika yubayyinu Allahu lakum ayatihi la'allakum ta-'aqlioona: "Allah thus makes clear to you His Signs that you may intellect"(Holy Quran 2:242)

"Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they Trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth; (Here) indeed are Signs for the people of intellect"(Noble Quran)

"Here is a relevant verse from the Noble Qur'an, cited by Nasir-i Khusraw, hujjat-i Khurasan in his Khawaan al-Ikhwaan : "It is He who created you from dust, then from a sperm drop, then from a blood clot, then He brings you forth as a child, then lets you reach your age of full strength, then lets you become old - though some of you die before - and then lets you reach the appointed term; and that haply you may find the intellect (la'allakum ta'qilun)." (Nasir Khusraw, 11th century Fatimid Ismaili cosmologist-philosopher-poet)

Chapter 30, Verse 27: He originates creation; then refashions it - for Him an easy task. His is the most Sublime Symbol in the heavens and the earth(Noble Quran, 7th Century CE)

Chapter 21, Verse 30: Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together before We clove them asunder, and of water fashioned every thing? Will they not then believe?(Noble Quran, 7th Century CE)

Chapter 51, verse 47: We built the heavens with might, and We expand it wide(Noble Quran, 7th Century CE)

Chapter 79, verse 30: And then he gave the earth an oval form(Noble Quran, 7th Century CE)

Chapter 86, verse 11: I swear by the reciprocating heaven.....(Noble Quran, 7th Century CE)

"According to a famous hadith of the Prophet Muhammad: The first(and only) thing created by God was the Intellect ('aql)(circa 632CE)

"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave"(Prophet Muhammad, circa 632CE)"

"Seek knowledge, even in China"(Prophet Muhammad, circa 632CE)

"One hour of contemplation on the works of the Creator is better than a thousand hours of prayer"(Prophet Muhammad, circa 632CE)

"The ink of the scholar is better than the blood of the martyr"(Prophet Muhammad, circa 632CE)

"All human beings, by their nature, desire to know."(Aristotle, The Metaphysics, circa 322BC)

Easy Nash

The Qur'an itself repeatedly recommends Muslims to become better educated in order better to understand God's creation: Aga Khan IV(2007)

The Quran tells us that signs of Allah's Sovereignty are found in the contemplation of His Creation: Aga Khan IV(2007)

This notion of the capacity of the human intellect to understand and to admire the creation of Allah will bring you happiness in your everyday lives: Aga Khan IV(2007)

Islam, eminently logical, placing the greatest emphasis on knowledge, purports to understand God's creation: Aga Khan IV(2006)

The first and only thing created by God was the Intellect(Aql): Prophet Muhammad(circa 632CE)