

**ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY IN THE CONTEMPORARY  
CONTEXT:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
THE THOUGHT OF SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR AND  
SYED NAQUIB AL-ATTAS**

by

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# CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	ii
<b>Table of Contents</b>	iii
<b>Abstrak</b>	vii
<b>Abstract</b>	ix
<b>Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION</b>	1
1.1. Introduction	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem	9
1.3. Objectives of the Study	12
1.4. Significance of the Study	13
1.5. Scope and Limitations of the Study	16
1.6. Methodology	18
1.7. Review of Related Literature	20
1.8. Organization of the Thesis	25
<b>Chapter2. A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY</b>	
2.1 The Meaning of Islamic Philosophy	27
2.2 Philosophy in the History of Islam	36
2.2.1 Beginning of Philosophical Discourse in Islam	37
2.2.2 Henry Corbin's View on History of Islamic Philosophy	39
2.2.3. S. H. Nasr's View on History of Islamic Philosophy	42
2.3 Contemporary Discussions of Islamic Philosophy	55
2.4 Conclusion	62

**Chapter 3. SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR’S ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY AS  
“KNOWLEDGE OF THE SACRED”**

3.1	Biography	64
3.2	Nasr’s Engagement with the West	71
3.2.1	Recovery of Metaphysics: Being rather than beings	72
3.2.2	Knowledge of the Sacred: Nasr’s Epistemological Encounter with the West	75
3.2.2.1	Desacralization of Knowledge in the West	75
3.2.2.2	Knowledge of “God is Reality”	81
3.2.3	Knowledge as Deliverance	85
3.2.4	Sacred Science and Ecology	89
3.3	Religious Pluralism and <i>Philosophia Perennis</i> in Nasr’s Thought	92
3.4	Conclusion: A Comprehensive Account of Nasr’s Philosophy.	96

**Chapter 4. SYED NAQUIB AL-ATTAS’ ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY AS  
“ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE”**

4.1	Biography	104
4.2	Al-Attas’ Engagement with the West	111
4.2.1	Recovery of Language and Islamic Worldview	112
4.2.2	Islamization of Knowledge: Al-Attas’ Epistemological Encounter with the West	117
4.2.2.1	Secularism and the Need for Islamization of Knowledge	117
4.2.2.2	The Meaning of Islamization of Knowledge	121
4.2.2.3	Philosophy of Science and Islam	126
4.2.3	Knowledge as A Way to Happiness	129

4.2.4 Islamic Metaphysics and Sufism	132
4.3 Religious Pluralism in Al-Attas' Thought	136
4.4 Conclusion: A Comprehensive Account of al-Attas' Philosophy	141
<b>Chapter 5. A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE THOUGHT OF S. H. NASR AND S. M. N. AL-ATTAS</b>	145
5.1 Nasr's and al-Attas' Understandings of Islamic Philosophy	146
5.1.1 Nasr's Understanding of Islamic Philosophy	146
5.1.2 Al-Attas' Understanding of Islamic Philosophy	150
5.2 A Critical Discussion on the Issues Raised by the Philosophy of S. H. Nasr and S. M. N. Al-Attas	156
5.2.1 The Root of the Crisis: Western Secularism or Religious Authoritarianism?	157
5.2.1.1 The Backwardness of Islamic Civilization and Ways to Overcome It	157
5.2.1.2 Secularism as the Source of the Crisis	165
5.2.1.3 Intellectual Authoritarianism as the Source of the Crisis	173
5.2.2 The Uniqueness of Islamic Intellectuality and Its Meanings	180
5.2.2.1 Re-Sacralization of Knowledge and the Certainty of Knowledge	180
(a) Re-sacralization of Knowledge	182
(b) The Certainty of Knowledge	187
5.2.2.2 The Issues in Constructing Islamic Intellectual Identity	
(a) A Call to the Indigenization of Knowledge	192
(b) Intellectual Islamic Fundamentalism	196

(c) Esoteric Knowledge and the Problem of Intellectual Elitism	200
5.2.3 The Debate on Religious Pluralism	203
5.2.3.1 Al-Attas' Finality of Islam	204
5.2.3.2 Nasr's Universalist View of Islam	207
5.2.3.3 The Debate on The Possibility of Religious Pluralism	210
5.3 Conclusion	224
<b>Chapter 6. CONCLUSION</b>	
6.1 Summary of Discussions	228
6.2 Findings of the Research	231
6.3 Suggestions for Future Research	236
6.4 Conclusion	244
<b>Bibliography</b>	246

**FALSAFAH ISLAM DALAM KONTEKS SEMASA: KAJIAN  
PERBANDINGAN ANTARA PEMIKIRAN SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR DAN  
SYED NAQUIB AL-ATTAS**

**ABSTRAK**

Dengan kepesatan globalisasi, dunia Islam menghadapi cabaran serius dari luar dan dalam. Cabaran dari luar ialah sekularisme Barat yang menghakis keimanan orang Islam yang menjadi tulang belakang tamadun Islam. Cabaran dari dalam ialah kehilangan identiti Islam, terutamanya keintelektualan Islam. Terdapat dua respon kepada cabaran tersebut: pertama, respon politik dan teologi Fundamentalisme Islam terhadap sekularisme Barat, ke dua, respon intelektual pergerakan Islamisasi ilmu.

Tesis ini memfokus kepada respon intelektual Muslim kepada cabaran globalisasi. Isu khusus yang dibincang ialah makna dan wacana falsafah Islam dalam konteks semasa. Tesis ini mengkaji pandangan dua orang tokoh falsafah Islam, iaitu Seyyed Hossein Nasr dan Syed Naquib al-Attas. Falsafah mereka memaparkan respon intelektual Muslim kepada cabaran yang dihadapi oleh umat Islam dalam dunia globalisasi semasa. Nasr dan al-Attas terkenal dalam kalangan intelektual Muslim dan bukan Muslim. Mereka telah menulis banyak buku dan makalah dalam bahasa Inggeris dan juga telah mengadakan perbincangan di dalam dan di luar dunia Islam.

Nasr dan al-Attas berpandangan bahawa krisis yang melanda orang Islam hari ini disebabkan sekularisme Barat. Untuk mengatasinya, ke dua-dua mereka berhujah perlunya proses Islamisasi ilmu yang boleh dicapai dengan mengkaji semula warisan

kaya falsafah Islam dan membina semula intelektualiti Islam yang mengintegrasikan pemikiran akal dan spiritualiti. Nasr dan al-Attas juga menangani isu kritikal tentang pluralisme agama. Walaupun kedua-duanya meyakini Islam adalah agama yang benar, mereka mempunyai pandangan yang berbeza tentang isu pluralisme agama. Nasr menerima kebenaran agama selain dari Islam tetapi al-Attas menolaknya.

Dunia Islam hari ini berada dalam kancah perubahan yang pesat. Pemikiran Nasr dan al-Attas boleh membimbing orang Islam bagaimana untuk menangani cabaran sekularisme dan globalisasi. Mereka berdua boleh dilihat sebagai dua tokoh falsafah Islam semasa yang berusaha untuk membina semula tamadun Islam dengan mengembalikan semula identiti keintelektualan Islam.

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**ABSTRACT**

With rapid globalization, the Muslim world is facing serious challenges both from outside and inside. The challenge from outside is Western domination and secular worldview which undermines the worldview of Muslims which is the backbone of Islamic civilization. The challenge from inside is the loss of Islamic identity, especially that of Islamic intellectuality. There are two main responses to these challenges: one, the political and theological response of Islamic Fundamentalism against Western secularism, and two, the intellectual response of the movement of re-sacralization of knowledge.

This thesis focuses on the intellectual responses of Muslim intellectuals to the challenges brought about by globalization. The specific issue dealt with is the meaning and discourse of Islamic philosophy in the contemporary context. The views of two Muslim philosophers: Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Syed Naquib al-Attas receive special focus in this study. Their philosophies show how Muslim intellectuals respond to the challenges faced by Muslims in the contemporary globalized world. Both Nasr and al-Attas are well-known to Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals. They have written many books and articles in English, and also had discussions within and outside of the Muslim world.

Nasr and al-Attas agree that the crisis faced by Muslims in the contemporary

globalized context is caused by Western secularism. To overcome it, they both argue for the re-sacralization of knowledge which can be accomplished by re-discovering the rich legacy of Islamic philosophy and re-constructing Islamic intellectuality which integrates both reason and spirituality. Nasr and al-Attas also deal with the critical issue of religious pluralism. Although they believe that Islam is the true religion which contains the absolute truth, Nasr and al-Attas have different views on this issue. While Nasr accepts there are genuine revelations apart from Islam, al-Attas does not.

The Muslim world is caught in the vortex of rapid changes. The thought of Nasr and al-Attas can serve as guides to Muslims on how to respond to the challenges of secularism and globalization. They can be viewed as two contemporary Muslim philosophers among others who try to rebuild the Islamic civilization by recovering the identity of Islamic intellectuality.

## Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Before globalization, most of human societies and religions can remain as they are. But in the globalization era it is no longer possible. The encounter with other cultures and religions is inevitable under globalization. Globalization pushes people to face the questions: “Why do I believe this?” “Why are there differences?” “How can I introduce my faith to others?” In a traditional society, people seldom had to face such questions, but it is unavoidable today. With worldwide telecommunication in today’s world, situations which are free from the above questions seldom exist.

The Muslim world is not an exception. Muslims are not free from the challenges raised by globalization<sup>1</sup>. It is important to understand the Muslim intellectuals’ response to globalization and its influence. Today, one fifth of the world population is Muslims. Muslims constitute one of the major religious groups in the contemporary world. Therefore, without understanding Islam and the Muslim mind, it is impossible to have a correct picture of today’s world. The inquiry of non-Muslims about the Muslim world is unavoidable.<sup>2</sup>

There are two different attitudes in viewing the Muslim world: one, viewing the

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<sup>1</sup> But many Muslim scholars understand globalization negatively. Globalization, for them, is understood as another form of neo-colonialism. It is a kind of pseudo-globalization, for it unifies the world with Western (secular) value without keeping the cultural identities of each civilization. Zeenath Kausar insists that the domination of Western imperialism was accomplished through three stages of development: colonialism through the political and military rule, neo-colonialism through ideologies like secularism and nationalism, and the last stage as globalization by cultural imperialism under Western hegemonization. (Kausar 2007: xi-xv) “This third stage of the Western mission of civilization the world is popularly known as globalization. this is an unfulfilled dream and a fake hope of a ‘global village’, ‘global fraternity’, ‘global economic cooperation’ and ‘global networking of information technology’ offered to the peripheral nations by the centre. Soon it is realized that what is said to be global is not ‘global’, but central; it is not globalization, rather ‘centralization’, or to express it more concretely, it is ‘Western globalization’, ‘Western hegemonization’.” (Kausar 2007: xv)

<sup>2</sup> Until the end of the last century, there were very few books on Islam and the Muslim world in my country, South Korea. But today, it is no longer true. The Koreans want to know more about the Muslim world. There are many books and articles discussing Islam. Islam is not a strange religion of a far and remote society. We hear the news about Islam and Muslim societies in the media almost every day.

Muslim world as a threat, and two, viewing the Muslim world as a partner for peaceful coexistence. Samuel P. Huntington is a scholar who subscribes to the former view. The theory of the “clash of civilizations” by Samuel Huntington<sup>3</sup> insists that the Islamic civilization is one of the serious threats for the future civilization of humanity. Huntington’s theory causes misunderstanding of the Islamic civilization. Huntington insists that the most serious “clashes among civilizations” are from the clash between the Islamic civilization and other civilizations. Huntington’s statement “Islam has bloody borders!” in his article of *Foreign Affairs* (1993) was controversial. Later, he mentioned some evidences of his opinion in his book.<sup>4</sup> He uses three reports on the intergroup conflicts. According to these reports on the world inter-ethnic conflicts of 1990s, many of the conflicts relate to Muslim peoples.<sup>5</sup>

Three different compilations of data thus yield the same conclusion: In the early 1990s Muslim were engaged in more intergroup violence than were non-Muslims, and two thirds to three-quarters of inter-civilizational wars were between Muslims and non-Muslims. *Islam’s borders are bloody*, and so are its innards (Huntington 2006:257-58).

But Edward W. Said<sup>6</sup> disagrees with Huntington. He insists that the Muslim world should be regarded as a partner for peaceful coexistence. He says Huntington’s

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<sup>3</sup> Huntington argues that post–Cold War conflict would most frequently and violently occur because of cultural clashes rather than ideological differences. The tension raised from cultural differences gradually replaces the ideological struggles originated from the classical notion of sovereign states. To understand current and future conflicts, cultural rifts must be considered, and culture — rather than the State — must be accepted as the locus of war. “It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines among civilizations will be the battle lines of the future”(Huntington 1993:22).

<sup>4</sup> Samuel P. Huntington (1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster).

<sup>5</sup> Huntington uses three scholars’ studies to support his opinion on “Muslims bloody borders.” They are the study on the ethno-political conflicts in 1993-94 by Ted Robert Gurr, the study on ethno conflict in 1993 by New York Times, and the analysis on civilizational conflicts in 1992 by Ruth Leger Sivard (Huntington1996:256-57).

<sup>6</sup> Edward W. Said is a Palestinian-American literary theorist and advocate for Palestinian rights. Said was an influential cultural critic and author, known best for his book *Orientalism* (1978), which catapulted him to international academic fame.

understanding of Islamic civilization is biased. Said argues that Huntington identifies the Islamic civilization with some fundamental fanatics who do not constitute the majority of Muslim society.

The basic paradigm of West versus the rest (the cold war opposition reformulated) remained untouched, and this is what has persisted, often insidiously and implicitly, in discussion since the terrible events of September 11. The carefully planned and horrendous, pathologically motivated suicide attack and mass slaughter by a small group of deranged militants has been turned into proof of Huntington's thesis. Instead of seeing it for what it is--the capture of big ideas (I use the word loosely) by a tiny band of crazed fanatics for criminal purposes...<sup>7</sup>

Said says that Islamic civilization has a strong intellectual tradition of dialogue rather than violence. The Islamic intellectual tradition is rooted in a profound philosophical foundation. The former president of Iran, Khatami emphasized that Islam has a strong philosophical tradition, and suggested a “dialogue among civilizations”<sup>8</sup> including Islam.

However, much of the information on the Muslim world discussed in the media is focused on the political aspects of the Muslim world; for example suicide bombings, kidnapping, internal wars, terrorism, etc. Most of the information about the Muslim world is limited to politics and focused on the negative aspects. In understanding a civilization, focusing on the negative political aspects only is not fair; understanding its intellectual tradition is necessary. There are many discussions among Muslim intellectuals on responses to the globalized post-modern contemporary world. To have a deeper understanding of the Muslim mind it is essential to understand the intellectual discussions among Muslim scholars. This is the reason why we need to discuss Islamic philosophy in the contemporary context.

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<sup>7</sup> Edward W. Said (2001) “The Clash of Ignorance,” *The Nation* (October 22). Available from World Wide Web <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20011022/said>

<sup>8</sup> Khatami’s slogan “Dialogue among Civilizations” became famous, after the United Nations adopted a resolution to name the year 2001 as the “year of Dialogue among Civilizations”.

Many people in the West misunderstand and consider that there is no Islamic philosophy interacting with the contemporary world. They insist that there was a kind of Islamic philosophy in the past, but it does not exist anymore today, because it was replaced with Islamic theology. Muhammad Suheyl Umar<sup>9</sup> agrees that there is such a suspicion on Islamic philosophy. “Many people wonder while some even doubt whether Islam has a genuine ‘philosophy.’ In the West it is common to identify philosophy in Islam with the period from the life of al-Farabi to that of Averroes” (Umar 2001:89).

After the most influential Muslim thinker al-Ghazali’s attack against philosophy, al-Qusaimi insisted, the philosophical tradition in Islam came to an end.<sup>10</sup> Al-Ghazali’s book entitled *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* was a critical argument against philosophy. Al-Ghazali insisted that Muslim society did not need to encourage philosophical discussion, for it just produced unnecessary confusion and doubts to Muslim minds. Philosophy was regarded as an obstacle to religious belief. After him, as many Western scholars thought that the philosophical discourses in Islam gradually disappeared. Theological argument rather than philosophy became dominant in Islam. In an article entitled “Al-Ghazali’s repudiation of causality: the destruction of philosophical enquiry in Islam,” Syed Alam Khundmiri<sup>11</sup> insisted that al-Ghazali was a Muslim scholar who gave a decisive blow to philosophy in the

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<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Suheyl Umar is a Pakistan Muslim philosopher. Since 1984 he worked with the Iqbal Academy Pakistan, a government research institution for the works and teachings of Iqbal. He also worked as the Academic Director, Institute of Islamic Culture, Chief Editor, Al-Ma‘arif and later on as Visiting scholar to International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

<sup>10</sup> “It is on this account that some modern Arab thinkers feel that the stagnation of the Muslim world is caused by al-Ghazali’s repudiation of causality. One bold writer of the modern Arab-world, al-Qusaimi, is of the opinion that the Muslim world cannot enter the age of enlightenment unless it rejects the al-Ghazalian world-outlook” (Ansari 2001:119).

<sup>11</sup> Syed Alam Khundmiri (1922-83) was an Indian Muslim scholar. He had interest in many different areas: Marxism, with its indifference to questions of minorities in nationalism; existentialism, which he saw as being closed off to the problems of community; and Islam, which he examined in relation to history and notions of time and change. One of his main concerns is to understand Islam in the modern context and scrutinize the modern in the light of Islam.

Islamic world.

Al-Ghazali undoubtedly occupies a paradoxical position in the history of Islamic philosophy. He is the acknowledged leader of orthodox Islam. It was he who gave a final and decisive blow to Islamic scholastic philosophy based on Aristotelian and Neoplatonic sources. This was such a decisive blow that philosophy ceased to remain a respectable term in the Islamic world and even powerful counter arguments by Ibn Rushd were not able to revive the respectability once attached to philosophy. Posterity remembers al-Ghazali as presenting the ‘argument of Islam’, and he is still the unchallenged leader of orthodox in almost the whole of the Islamic world” (Ansari 2001:120).

During the Middle Ages of the West, the Islamic world achieved an advanced civilization. There was a strong philosophical tradition as the foundation of the advanced Islamic civilization. But the philosophical tradition in Islam, according to Khundmiri, became weaker after al-Ghazali’s attack on philosophy. But many Muslim scholars do not agree with this view. The philosophical tradition in Islam had not totally disappeared from the Muslim world. It might be true that, in the Arabic world, there was a weak foundation of philosophical discussion. But it is not the case with the Muslim world as a whole. In the non-Arabic Muslim world, for example, Muslim intellectuals in Persia, Turkey, India, and Pakistan kept the philosophical discussion throughout history. The contemporary discussion of Islamic philosophy, therefore, is not a new creation but a continuation of the old tradition of Islamic philosophy. The tradition of Islamic philosophy, once flourished during the “Islamic Golden civilization,” continues until today.

Islamic philosophers during this Golden Age could not avoid being aware of there being many traditions, cultures, and competing claims of insight into the truth and the good. We have seen some examples of their confronting and adjudicating this multiculturalism. They found success in seeking to extract what each tradition offered, where not all traditions had an equal amount to offer on each subject. They would ignore the Greeks in history and arithmetic, but instead developed algebra, while studying them in geometry, astronomy and philosophy. They extracted universal truths and objective structures from their multicultural studies. They sought to mould their language so as to match up with reality, and not blindly follow the structures of Arabic grammar. Such are the lessons we can learn today from Islamic philosophers

(Back 2008:272).

In his book *History of Islamic Philosophy* (1996), Seyyed Hossein Nasr argues that there is a tradition of philosophy in Islam. He insists that Islamic Philosophy is a living philosophical tradition.

Islamic Philosophy has been always for me a living tradition to which I consider myself to belong. I believe that it is of the utmost importance for the Islamic world to nurture and support the study of Islamic Philosophy from its own perspective and to train a young generation of philosophers who stand firm on the intellectual foundations of Islam and Islamic philosophy ... (Hahn 2001:137).

Before recent revival of Islamic philosophy, most of the Western study of Islamic philosophy understood Islamic Philosophy as an Arabic translation of ancient Greek philosophy which flourished in medieval Islam and then disappeared. They thought there is no innate philosophical value in Islamic philosophy. But many Muslim intellectuals disagree with this opinion. They argue that Islamic Philosophy has its own value, and it can contribute to dealing with the crisis of the contemporary civilization. Islamic philosophy can be respected as a living tradition of thought.

S.H. Nasr compares Western philosophy with Islamic philosophy in relation to prophecy. Western civilization is facing a serious crisis because it removed the sacred dimension, while Islamic philosophy keeps the balance between prophecy and reason (Nasr 2006:8). For Nasr, Western philosophy's divorce from the sacred (de-sacralization) brought the dilemmas of Western civilization today.

In the same way that the disappearance in the West of authentic metaphysics led to its "replacement" by all kinds of feeble philosophical replacements which have finally led to the suicide of philosophy in postmodernist thought, the eclipse of sacred science in the modern world has led to numerous substitutes ranging from occultism to "new age" treatments of the traditional sciences to the trivialization of the various forms of traditional and sacred sciences by their assessment through the eyes of positivism. The consequence is the appearance of a whole array of misinterpretations and caricatures of the

sacred sciences which have become practically part and parcel of the present-day cultural scene (Nasr 1993:173).

The crisis of Western civilization resulting from the loss of the sacred dimension, is obvious in relation to the environmental crisis. Muslim intellectuals suggest Islamic philosophy as a philosophical model to overcome the environmental crisis today.

The lost sacredness of nature somehow needs to be recovered in the Western worldview. Sustainability, if taken to its deepest core, in essence requires transcending the modern as well as the postmodern worldview toward what could then again be called a spiritual worldview. The transformation of the western worldview toward the re-enchantment of nature (Berman, 1981; McGrath, 2002) would see the relativism and nihilism paramount today replaced by universally accepted metaphysical, epistemological, and ontological teachings (Beringer 2006:37).

Almut Beringer<sup>12</sup> believes that Islamic philosophy can be an alternative as a response to the crisis of the contemporary world, because Islamic philosophy has sought to keep the balance between metaphysical values and the development of nature. According to Muslim scholars, Islamic philosophy can be an answer to the crisis of Western philosophy because of its integration of intellectuality with Islamic spirituality.

There is another important reason why the discussion on Islamic Philosophy is so important. Philosophy works for constructing the foundation of inter-cultural dialogues. In trans-cultural communication in a globalized world, language is a major barrier (the different meanings of the terms make people misunderstand each other) and refining the language and the basic concepts is the most urgent task to be done. And this is the philosopher's job. Language reflects the worldview of each culture

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<sup>12</sup> Almut Beringer currently serves as the Director of Environmental Studies and Sustainability at the University of Prince Edward Island, eastern Canada. Her research interests span the natural sciences (forest ecology), social sciences (conservation psychology), and the humanities (environmental ethics, spirituality). Her work covers theoretical and community-based research.

and religion. Especially this is true with the Muslim language which is strongly connected with Islamic spirituality. Therefore, the communication in Islamic context could be seriously marred without the philosophically well-defined language.

Language reflects ontology. Introducing key concepts foreign to a language involves not merely the translating of words, but more profoundly the translating of symbolic forms belonging to the super system of a foreign worldview not compatible with the worldview projected by the language into which such concepts are introduced. .... One of the main causes for the emergence of intellectual confusion and anarchy is the changes and restrictions which they have effected in the meanings of key terms that project the worldview of Islam which is derived from Revelation (Al-Attas 1995:20).

In a globalized context, the philosophical discourse which refines language and concepts is an essential prerequisite in cross-cultural communication. Therefore, discussion on Islamic philosophy is meaningful for inter-cultural dialogue.

The discussion on religious pluralism is another issue which, with globalization, was brought to the attention of Muslim world. Globalization makes ordinary people face the plural religiosity of the world which was never faced before to such an extent and degree.

The problem of religious pluralism is to a certain extent the result of modernity, or, as one might call it, 'globalization'. As Nasr points out, in pre-traditional societies, people used to live in homogeneous religious worlds in which they treated the values of their religion in an absolute and binding manner. For them it was unnecessary or irrelevant to seek salvation or intellectual comfort in other traditions. Clearly, the phenomenon of the plurality of religions did not pose the same problem for a traditional Muslim living in Fez or Mashad, ... but, as Nasr maintains, now that the homogeneity of religious cultures has broken down, and the intellectual and existential contact with the authentic spirituality of other traditions has become increasingly available, it is no longer possible to ignore the religious and theological claims of other traditions (Aslan 1998:116-117).

For Westerner secular thinkers and Muslims, like the other religious peoples, facing religious pluralism is unavoidable. The development of mass media and communication has made the world closer. There is a flood of information which

comes from all over the world. Muslims are exposed to other values and worldviews which are very different from their own. This challenges Muslim intellectuals to review and reconstruct the Islamic intellectual identity. Because Islamic intellectuality is rooted in Islamic religion and spirituality, intellectuality in Islam should be approached through Islamic religious system and spirituality. The issue of religious pluralism should be a part of Islamic philosophy.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Islamic world experienced tremendous changes in its rebuilding. With the independence of Muslim countries, Muslim intellectuals had to face several problems to recover its pride and glory. One of the problems was to recover the Islamic identity as the foundation of Muslim thought and society. Since the Muslim world was colonized after its defeat by the Western world, Muslim intellectuals had to struggle with the question “Why does the Islamic civilization fail to recover the glory of her Golden Age?” There are several opinions on this question. The modernists insisted that it was because there was no such modernization in the Muslim world while the Western world did. They insisted that Westernization was the way to rebuild the old Islamic prosperity. They wanted to accept the secular worldview which was regarded as the foundation of Western civilization. But most of the traditional religious leaders disagreed to this. They believed that the only way to recover the Islamic Golden Age again is to return to the fundamental teachings of Islam and apply the religious law onto society literally. The former view was developed as Islamic modernist, while the latter view as Islamic Fundamentalism.

But not every Muslim intellectual agrees to these two views. The modernist’s

view was criticized, for they argued that Western civilization cannot be an ideal option for the future of Islamic civilization. Many Western scholars also say that Western civilization too is in crisis. Danger of nuclear war, over-population, civilizational clashes, global warming, the issue of pollution, and the moral degradation are the crises that human beings face today, and these crises are understood as the results of the Western secular worldview in development. The secular worldview which the Western civilization is founded on is not appropriate for the Islamic world. Many Muslim scholars worry about that secularism would ultimately undermine Islamic belief.

Islamic Fundamentalism also has a problem as an option for the future of Islamic civilization. Islamic Fundamentalism incurs suspicion as a genuine Islamic idea because of its terrorist impression. Islam is a peace-loving religion and the militant attitude of Islamic Fundamentalism may not be compatible with Islamic teachings. Its strong emphasis on the political slogans may limit the Muslim intellectuals' creative thinking.

Globalization and religious pluralism are other issues which make the situation more complicated. Globalization changes the world and makes it to be a closely connected community. There is no absolute and exclusive religious authority. Religious pluralism becomes an issue. In today's globalized world, encounter with other religions is common. In the contemporary context, Islamic worldview is not free from the discussion of religious pluralism. The issue of religious pluralism therefore, becomes significant and urgent.

These problems push Muslim intellectuals to find another way for the future of Islamic civilization. The new way can be accomplished through re-constructing

Islamic intellectual identity.<sup>13</sup> Reconstructing knowledge of the Sacred in the contemporary Islamic contexts as proposed by S. H. Nasr and the movement of Islamization of knowledge by al-Attas are the typical Islamic intellectual movements. They want to recover the Islamic intellectual identity through their philosophies. Nasr's and al-Attas' Islamic philosophies keep the rational discussion without the loss of Islamic spirituality. There should be integration between Islamic religiosity and modern understandings of intellectuality.

This can be developed towards a movement of Islamic philosophy in the contemporary context. It deals with several unique issues in the Islamic context. What are the urgent issues in the contemporary philosophical discourse, especially in the Islamic context? There are at least three issues to be mentioned: they are (1) *Islamic intellectual identity in a modern and globalized world*, (2) *Islamic ways to overcome the dominance of the secular worldview*, and (3) *the multi-religiosity of the globalized pluralistic world*.

The researcher will focus on the two topics in the following discussion: (1) How do Muslim intellectuals respond to secularism? (2) How do Muslim intellectuals respond to religious pluralism?

In this thesis, we will analyze the discussions of Islamic philosophers in the contemporary context. Philosophical discussions are not free from the historical contexts. The philosophical discussion interacts with the historical situation.<sup>14</sup> We

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<sup>13</sup> The researcher believes the intellectual movement is more important in overcoming the dilemma of the contemporary Muslim world, for knowledge is a more fundamental dimension in understanding the transitional changes of a society. In the modern time of Islamic world Iqbal is a typical example who raised the need for intellectual movement in Islamic reformation. Iqbal was one of the pioneers who opened the intellectual movement in Islamic context. He argued that knowledge is the most important aspect in overcoming the dilemma of Muslim civilization in the modern world.

<sup>14</sup> In Islamic context, some may disagree that Islamic philosophy is developed with interaction with the historical context, for, they believe, Islamic philosophy is founded upon the revelation which is beyond historicity. But it is only a half truth. The revelation or the Primordial Truth is transcendental, but man's understanding of the message happens within historical contexts. God reveals His revelation to humans according to his/her environment.

will study the discussions of two contemporary Islamic philosophers on the issues raised in the contemporary contexts. Islamic philosophy can be a way to keep the Muslim's unique identity, but at the same time it is an intellectual response to the globalization led by Western secularism. The globalized pluralistic post-modern world is another type of secularism which Islam has to overcome; at the same time its pluralistic paradigm can be an opportunity for Islam to connect to the rest of the world since pluralism allows each religion to express its own absoluteness.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this thesis is to evaluate the discussions of Islamic Philosophy in the contemporary globalized context.

Firstly, the researcher wants to evaluate the discussions of Islamic Philosophy in the contemporary context. The contemporary Islamic philosophers are struggling to revive the Islamic intellectual tradition through overcoming the secular worldview from the West. The discussions of contemporary Islamic philosophy including Nasr's and al-Attas' Islamic philosophies are the responses to the modern secular worldview dominating Muslim minds. This secular worldview undermines the Islamic faith as the foundation of Muslim society. Through analyzing Nasr's and al-Attas' Islamic philosophies we can understand how Islamic philosophy works to overcome the modern secular worldview.

Secondly, the researcher will discuss Nasr's and al-Attas' views of the nature of Islamic intellectuality. With re-sacralization of knowledge, S. H. Nasr and S. M. N. al-Attas try to construct Islamic intellectual identity founded upon Islamic religiosity. We can see the uniqueness of Islamic philosophy through analyzing their arguments on how to integrate spirituality with rationality in constructing knowledge.

Lastly, the researcher will analyze Nasr's and al-Attas' attitude towards the issue of religious pluralism. Because Islamic philosophy is closely connected with Islamic spirituality, their attitude on religious pluralism is important in understanding their philosophical views. The philosophical thoughts of S. H. Nasr and S. M. N. al-Attas help us to see how Muslim intellectuals respond to the challenge of religious pluralism.<sup>15</sup>

Islamic philosophy can be a tool to construct the Islamic identity and promote cross-religious discussions without the loss of Islamic spirituality. There should be Islamic intellectual interactions with other civilizations in the contemporary context. Islam, as one of the largest world religions, has to participate in inter-civilizational dialogues. Understanding Islamic philosophies in the contemporary context would be necessary to promote the inter-civilizational dialogues. Nasr's and al-Attas' Islamic philosophies can show us the different perspectives of Islamic intellectuals in responding to the globalized contemporary world. The analysis of the discussion of these two Islamic philosophers can give us a better understanding of the Muslim mind today.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

In an article entitled "Roots of Muslim Rage", Bernard Lewis<sup>16</sup> began his article with a question "Why so many Muslims deeply resent the West, and why their bitterness

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<sup>15</sup> S. H. Nasr agrees that other religions include the Primordial Truth originated from the Ultimate Reality. A. Aslan says that Nasr seems to accept the pluralistic view on religion. But there is a significant difference in Nasr's pluralistic view from the general view of religious pluralism. In general, the origin of pluralism is at human response to the Ultimate or the Divinity, and it is influenced by the cultural and historical contexts. The plurality of religion is from human responses under the historical contexts. But Nasr's understanding on the plurality of religion is different. He understood it from God. God reveals His will, but differently according to human needs. The plurality of religion is from God and transcends the human conceptualization (Aslan 2001:114-115).

<sup>16</sup> Bernard Lewis (born May 31, 1916) is a British-American historian, scholar in Oriental studies, and political commentator. He is regarded as one of the West's leading scholars in the study of the Middle East region.

will not easily be mollified?” The image of the Muslim to the non-Muslim world is the face of anger. It is not important whether that impression is true. The important fact is that the non-Muslim world has that image of Muslims. And this is a burden for the Muslim civilization to connect with other civilizations. Why is the Islamic civilization seen as ‘enraged’? Where did this image come from? This may be one of the most asked questions in today’s world. In the newspaper we often read the articles reporting Muslim terrorists’ attacks. Those attacks seem endless. Those negative impressions are partly from the Islamic Fundamentalist fanatic’s terrorism. Or it is partly from the influence of mass media or from political propaganda of the West.

Then what are the roots of Muslim rage in the contemporary world? There are some practical reasons why Muslims are upset with the West. One of them is historical pains from Western invasion. Crusade war and the colonialism in the past, and the Israel-Palestine issue today are the reasons that make Muslims very upset. And the invasion of Western secular culture is another area: sexism, consumerism, political dictatorship, and economic and political imperialism etc. But Lewis mentions the Islamic worldview as a root of Muslim rage. One of the key concepts of Islamic worldview is the warfare between God and Satan.<sup>17</sup> Islamic worldview includes the teachings of warfare between good and evil. According to classical Islamic worldview the world can be divided into two opposite areas: “House of

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<sup>17</sup> In his article titled “Roots of Muslim Rage” (1990), Bernard Lewis attributes it to the fundamental aspect of Islamic belief of “God has enemy (Satan)!” From the beginning Islam had to fight with the enemies who were against God. Muslims believe that there are enemies against God the Absolute and God expects us to join the war against God’s enemy. “The Koran is of course strictly monotheistic, and recognizes one God, one universal power only. There is a struggle in human hearts between good and evil, between God’s commandments and the tempter, but this is seen as a struggle ordained by God, with its outcome preordained by God, serving as a test of mankind, and not, as in some of the old dualist religions, a struggle in which mankind has a crucial part to play in bringing about the victory of good over evil.” Bernard Lewis, 1990. “Roots of Muslim Rage,” *The Atlantic Monthly* September 266(3):47-60. Available from Website <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/199009/muslim-rage>

Islam” and “House of War.”<sup>18</sup> And there will inevitably be a ‘holy war’ to protect the “House of Islam” from the “House of War.” They believe that Western secular and pluralistic worldview undermine the monotheistic faith of the “House of Islam”.<sup>19</sup>

In fact there is a feeling of frustration among Muslim intellectuals with the Western domination of the Muslim world. Many Muslims are not comfortable when they feel they are marginalized in today’s globalized world. But this is just one of the many faces of Muslims; the raging image of Muslims does not reflect the Muslim world as a whole. Islamic civilization is still one of the largest civilizations in the world. Many Muslim intellectuals are still proud of their great achievement in the past. They are confident that one day Muslims can recover the greatness of Islamic civilization and decide the future direction of human society. Islamic intellectuality has that potential. Discussion on Islamic philosophy in the contemporary context can show the possibility of Islam’s harmonious coexistence with other civilizations.

Some contemporary Islamic philosophers reject Western ways because Western civilization is not a good model to follow. Western secular worldview removes the spiritual and transcendental dimension from philosophical discourses, and the Western mind is overruled by relativism. On the contrary, Islam has been keeping its

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<sup>18</sup> The former is the world where Muslims live in and God’s revelation and the Shari’ah guide the people to the right path. But the latter is the world of non-believers. It is natural that Muslims have negative feelings towards Western secularism which is regarded as a “House of war”.

<sup>19</sup> There are two different Muslim responses to the West: acceptance and rejection. One of Muslims’ responses to Western civilization is desire to imitation. Muslims want to get the physical power which Western civilization accomplished through importing the Western worldview. “At first the Muslim response to Western civilization was one of admiration and emulation -- an immense respect for the achievements of the West, and a desire to imitate and adopt them. This desire arose from a keen and growing awareness of the weakness, poverty, and backwardness of the Islamic world as compared with the advancing West. The disparity first became apparent on the battlefield but soon spread to other areas of human activity. Muslim writers observed and described the wealth and power of the West, its science and technology, its manufactures, and its forms of government.” (Lewis 1990)

But there is another reaction to Western civilization. Muslim Fundamentalists do not agree that Islamic civilization should follow the direction of Western civilization. They also had a feeling of humiliation when they lost the wars against the West. But their response was not the same with the modernist Muslims. They understand their failure does not from lack of Western rationality and secular value, but from unfaithfulness to their Islamic belief. According to their perspective secularism and modernism is not something they follow, but an enemy to fight against.

philosophical tradition with its spirituality.

As S. H. Nasr insists, the sacred dimension is essential to human knowledge. “It is in the nature and destiny of man ultimately to know the Absolute and the Infinite through an intelligence which is total and objective and which is inseparable from the Sacred that is at once its origin and end.” (Nasr1981:3) From the beginning, human being is connected with the sacred, so human knowledge is essentially directed to Ultimate Reality. With the removal of the sacred aspect from knowledge, human knowledge loses the power of the sapiential dimension. Human beings need knowledge not only to understand the external world but also to know the human soul and the divine worlds. The spiritual and transcendental dimension of knowledge is also important to human life.

The depleting of knowledge of its sacred character and the creation of a “profane” science which is then used to study even the most sacred doctrines and forms at the heart of religion have led to a forgetting of the primacy of the sapiential dimension within various traditions and the neglect of the traditional doctrine of man which has envisaged him as a being possessing the possibility of knowing things in principle and the principles of all things leading finally to the knowledge of Ultimate Reality (Nasr 1981:6).

Rediscovery of the sense of wonder and the sense of the Sacred through Islamic philosophy can be an answer to the crisis of the Western mind. In Islamic philosophy, the Sacred is still considered as the origin and the aim of knowledge. Islamic philosophy includes the sacred dimension of knowledge. It understands philosophy with the esoteric and mystical aspects. That is why S. H. Nasr and S. M. N. al-Attas argue that Islamic philosophy can be the answer to the dilemma of Western secular philosophy.

## **1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

It is not possible to cover the whole history of Islamic Philosophy because the Islamic philosophical tradition has a long history and many different views. The researcher has interest in the discussions of Islamic philosophy especially in the contemporary context. To analyze the discussion of Islamic philosophy in the contemporary context, the researcher, therefore, chose two Muslim philosophers: Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Syed Naquib al-Attas. They have developed their own philosophical systems to explain their philosophical views as Islamic philosophies. The researcher wants to identify the contemporary issues of Islamic philosophy through analyzing two Muslim philosophers' arguments.

S. H. Nasr, who is an Iranian and teaching in the United States,<sup>20</sup> redefines the issues of Islamic philosophy in the contemporary context. He is confident that the Islamic philosophical tradition can be helpful in overcoming the crisis of Islamic and Western philosophical dilemma. S. M. N. Al-Attas who is a Malaysian philosopher and one of the Muslim scholars leading a movement called "Islamization of knowledge," is another Islamic philosopher. He also tries to rediscover the discussion of Islamic Philosophy in the contemporary context, especially in the Malay context.

The reasons for the choice of these two scholars are as follows;

- 1) Both are active Muslim philosophers who redefine the issues of Islamic Philosophy for the Muslim and the non-Muslim worlds. They follow the tradition of Islamic philosophy with emphasis on the superiority of Revelation. Both try to introduce the meaning of Islamic philosophy in a globalized context.
- 2) Both are more focused on the philosophical approach, while many other Muslim scholars are focused on the political and theological dimensions.
- 3) Both are effective educators. They expand their philosophical views through raising new generations of Islamic philosophers. They and their disciples are actively involved in civilizational dialogues. Their philosophies contribute towards promoting academic civilizational dialogues between the Muslim and the non-Muslim world.

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<sup>20</sup> S. H. Nasr is teaching as professor of Islamic Studies at the George Washington University, Washington DC since 1984.

- 4) Another important aspect is that they wrote most of their books and articles in English. It means their philosophies are accessible and can facilitate interaction with other philosophers not only within the Islamic world but also of the non-Muslim world.

Through studying Nasr's and al-Attas' Islamic philosophies, we can have more understanding on the issues of Islamic philosophy in a globalized world. And it can be helpful for Muslims to have clearer identities and, for the non-Muslims, to have a better understanding of the Muslim mind. And it opens more possibility of Islam's inter-civilizational dialogue with the non-Muslim world.

This thesis has some limitations. To understand Islam deeply, knowledge of Arabic language is required. But the researcher has little knowledge of Arabic. So the materials used for this thesis are mainly those written in English. Since the two philosophers wrote most of their works in English, the researcher could approach their thought on Islamic Philosophy without difficulty.

The main interest of this thesis is on the discussion of Islamic philosophy in the contemporary context. Although the two philosophers discuss many different issues in Islamic philosophy, however, in this thesis, we will limit our discussion on certain issues of Islamic philosophy, which are the responses to Western secularism and views on religious pluralism.

## **1.6 Methodology**

In this thesis the researcher will try to evaluate the issues of Islamic philosophy in the contemporary context through analyzing and comparing the works of the two chosen Islamic philosophers: Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Syed Naquib al-Attas. These two authors wrote many books and had debates with many thinkers in different areas.

The researcher will mainly use the “text analysis”<sup>21</sup> of the two philosophers’ original works. There are many other articles evaluating Nasr’s and al-Attas’ philosophical views. The researcher will use the secondary sources of other scholars in evaluating their Islamic philosophies as well.

This is a comparative study.<sup>22</sup> The researcher will compare the issues and the ways of approach of Nasr’s and al-Attas’ Islamic philosophies. And the researcher will discuss the issues raised by the two philosophers. They are: the issue of re-sacralization, the certainty of knowledge, religious pluralism in Islam, esoterism and the issue of intellectual elitism, the relation between science and religious authority, and the sacred nature of language.

The objective of this thesis is to examine the main ideas of two Muslim

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<sup>21</sup> Textual analysis is a methodology in the social sciences for studying the content of communication. Textual analysis involves analyzing texts. It is a study of recorded human communications. What is a text? It is whatever we need to produce an interpretation of meanings from: books, websites, paintings and laws, television programme, film, magazine, T-shirt or piece of furniture. Textual analysis is considered a scholarly methodology in the humanities by which texts are studied as to authorship, authenticity, or meaning. The method of textual analysis enables the researcher to include large amounts of textual information and systematically identify its properties. Yet such amounts of textual information must be categorized analysis, providing at the end a meaningful reading of content under scrutiny. Alan McKee, 2003. *Textual Analysis: A Beginner’s Guide* (London: Sage Publications), 1-33.

<sup>22</sup> Comparative study is an approach to discover some understandings through comparing two or more things with a certain view. The comparative method is often used in the early stages of the development of a branch of science. It can help the researcher to ascend from the initial level of exploratory case studies to a more advanced level of general theoretical models, invariances, such as causality or evolution. There are two different approaches in implementing the comparative study: the descriptive study and the normative study. The descriptive approach is for getting knowledge of description or explanation of the object of the study. This method is adequate when there are several things, ideas or situations to be compared. The researcher just describes the differences between the objectives of study, and extracts some basic knowledge. The normative approach tries to define how things should be, which also includes the subjective point of view. The normative study uses for the evaluative approach. The difference between descriptive and normative styles of comparison is that in normative analysis one of the principal criteria is evaluative like "satisfaction", "usefulness" etc. (Werhane 1994: 175-180).

This comparative research method can be used to philosophical study. This is called as “comparative philosophy.” It may be difficult to say what “comparative philosophy” exactly is, but there is considerable agreement on it. Basically, it became clear that comparative philosophy has at least two potential dimensions that most comparative philosophers accept. 1) Use terms, ideas, or concepts from one philosophical tradition to help understand or interpret another philosophical tradition. 2) Through cross-tradition engagement, seek to advance or develop philosophy. Alasdair MacIntyre is well-known for having argued that, notwithstanding the existence of a kind of incommensurability (on which see further below), it is sometimes possible to compare two traditions and see which one is superior. He argues that one might come to see that one’s tradition has failed by its own lights, and furthermore that an alternative tradition can both explain this failure, and does not itself fail by its own lights. In such a case it can be rational, MacIntyre says, to adopt the alternative tradition. (Angle 2010: 107)

philosophers. Through this comparative study, the researcher will describe some essential discussions of Islamic philosophy in the contemporary context. In the comparative study of Nasr's and al-Attas' Islamic philosophies, the researcher will use three key questions as guidelines for comparison. The three main questions are: "How do they respond to the Western secular worldview to overcome its negative influence?" "What are the core values in re-constructing Islamic intellectual identity?" and "How do their Islamic philosophical discussions deal with religious pluralism in a globalized world?"

### **1.7 Review of Related Literature**

There are few comparative studies of S. H. Nasr and S. M. N. al-Attas. The researcher found just several articles which compare the two philosophers. One of them is Mohd Hazim Shah's "Contemporary Muslim Intellectuals and Their Responses to Modern Science and Technology" (2001).<sup>23</sup> In this article Shah compares two philosophers' views on science. S. H. Nasr and S. M. N. al-Attas agree that the Islamic intellectuals need to develop Islamic science which integrates scientific knowledge with Islamic spirituality.

There are critical evaluations of Nasr's and al-Attas' view on Islamic science. Pervez Hoodbhoy, a Muslim scientist teaching at a university in Pakistan, is one of them. He disagrees with Nasr's and al-Attas' ideas of Islamic science. In his book *Islam and Science: Religious Orthodoxy and the Battle for Rationality* (1991), Hoodbhoy criticizes Nasr's and al-Attas' concept of Islamic science as a return to Medieval science. He agrees that the modern secular science is in crisis because of the loss of metaphysical foundation, but it does not mean that modern science has to

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<sup>23</sup> This article is printed in *Studies in Contemporary Islam* 3(2) 1-30.

return to the condition of medieval science which was dominated by religious dogmas. In fact, the situation is the opposite. Modern science could achieve a tremendous progress of knowledge after removal of the chain of religious authority. He insists that S. H. Nasr and S. M. N. al-Attas misunderstand the concept of Islamic science as an effort to return to the intellectual darkness of the medieval period dominated by religious authority (Hoodbhoy 1991:69-74).

Ali H. Zaidi, in his article “Muslim Reconstructions of Knowledge and the Re-enchantment of Modernity” (2006), tries to evaluate S. H. Nasr and S. M. N. al-Attas’ Islamic philosophies as “Muslim reconstructions of knowledge” in the context of the globalized world. Zaidi insists that it is inevitable for Muslim intellectuals to face the pressure of inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue. The Muslim reconstruction of knowledge is a prerequisite in responding to the challenge. He understands the Islamic philosophical discussions in the contemporary context are a kind of bridge building between Islamic civilization and the non-Muslim worlds.

Joseph E. B. Lumbard explains Nasr’s and al-Attas’ Islamic philosophies as a perennial philosophy in the tradition of Rene Guenon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Frithjof Schuon, and Titus Burckhardt. S. H. Nasr and S. M. N. al-Attas developed the perennial ideas in the context of contemporary world. In the twentieth century they began to discuss the rise of an entirely new approach to the Orient, and the Islamic values.

In the wake of these pioneers, the last few decades have seen the emergence of Muslim writers who are fully conversant with both European and Islamic intellectual traditions. Among these are authors such as *Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, Martin Lings, Charles Le Gai Eaton, and Jean-Louis Michon – all of whom have intellectual roots in both the East and West and consciously follow in the tradition of Schuon and Burckhardt. In addition there are numerous other scholars, such as A. K. Brohi in Pakistan and *Naquib al-Attas* in Malaysia, who provide Islamic responses to the challenges of secular humanism with full awareness of both intellectual traditions. The writings of such authors have brought to Western audiences the intellectual traditions of Islam which

have too long laid beyond the purview of Western academics who preferred to see the Islamic intellectual tradition as a thing of the past. (Lumbard 2009:xv).

S. H. Nasr has discussed with other scholars on many different areas. His main interest, during his early days, was on the relation between religious faith and science, especially between Islam and science. His doctoral dissertation written in 1964 was on Islamic cosmology.<sup>24</sup> Later he suggested Islamic cosmology as an answer to Western ecological crisis. He criticizes the secular Western worldview, because it views nature as an object to be conquered. His idea on Islamic cosmology was later developed as the concept of Islamic science. The sacred scientific knowledge comes to the human mind through God's illumination. God's presence, rather than the representation of the world, is the source of sacred science. S. H. Nasr, therefore, calls this knowledge as "presential knowledge".

S. H. Nasr later extended his discussion on the concept of "the sacred science" into the epistemological and metaphysical dimension. He says that the recovery of Islamic metaphysics and sacred knowledge is urgently needed to cure the philosophical crisis today. He believes that through the rediscovery of the Islamic philosophical tradition, Muslim scholars can reconstruct Islamic philosophy appropriate to the contemporary context. Islamic philosophy is a philosophy which keeps the balance between spirituality and rationality.

There are many discussions regarding Nasr's philosophical views. *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (2001) edited by Lewis E. Hahn, Randall E. Auxier, and Lucian W. Stone Jr. is a book with many debates on Nasr's philosophy. The editors divide Nasr's philosophy into three categories: (1) *philosophia perennis* (2) science and human knowledge and (3) Islam: Its world and the world at large. In

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<sup>24</sup> The title of S. H. Nasr's dissertation was *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* from Harvard University in 1964.

those debates, Nasr's perennialism was challenged with its metaphysical presuppositions. Perennial Truth as the foundation of the philosophical discourse is criticized because of its obscurity. Nasr's concept of 'tradition' and its request of returning to the past<sup>25</sup> were also criticized, because they are beyond verification. Nasr's critical evaluation of the modern secular worldview is another controversial issue debated. Nasr's idea of "sacred science" and "knowledge of the sacred" raises the issue of the relation between spirituality and reason. The possibility of the localized science is another topic discussed. In the last part of the book, the scholars discuss the meaning of Islam in Nasr's philosophy. There are Nasr's replies to each article in this book. Through the debates the reader can see Nasr's philosophical views on many different issues.

Another excellent study on S. H. Nasr's Islamic philosophy is Adnan Aslan's book *Religious Pluralism in Christian and Islamic Philosophy: The Thought of John Hick and Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (1998). In this book, A. Aslan made a comparative study between John Hick and S. H. Nasr on the issue of religious pluralism. He explains Nasr's Perennial Philosophy as a view of religious pluralism. But his view has some unique aspects which is different from that of the Western view. For example, John Hick understands religious pluralism as a result of human responses to the different religious experiences. Religious pluralism, therefore, is understood as a human invention in the historical contexts. But S. H. Nasr views religious pluralism not from human activities but as God's manifestation to different human contexts. For him, every religion's religiosity originates from God's revelation rather than a

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<sup>25</sup> Dean criticizes Nasr's suggestion to return to the medieval paradigm for science and knowledge. Cf. Dean, Thomas (1984). "Feature Book Review: Primordial Tradition or Postmodern Hermeneutics?" *Philosophy East and West*. 34(2):211-226. Liu is another philosopher who criticizes Nasr's view on secularism. In history, secularism contributed many good things to human society. Cf. Liu, Shu-hsien (2001). "Reflections on Tradition and Modernity: A Response to Seyyed Hossein Nasr from a Neo-Confucian Perspective," in Lewis Edwin Hahn, Randall E. Auxier and Lucian W, Stone, Jr., *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (Chicago: Open Court): 253-269.

result of human responses. They have different religious doctrines and rituals, but at the same time, they are one, for all are from the same origin. All of their religiosities are from God's direct revelation.

Haifaa Jawad analyzes Nasr's philosophy of religion in his article "Seyyed Hossein Nasr and the Study of Religion in Contemporary Society" (2005). He evaluates Nasr's study on religion, especially on Islam as an answer to the poverty of contemporary Western philosophy.

S. M. N. Al-Attas is a creative philosopher who discusses Islamic philosophy in the Sufi context. Al-Attas' study on Islamic philosophy began with the study of Malay Sufis. Al-Attas' main concern in his Islamic philosophy is the recovery of Islamic spirituality in philosophical discourses. He began his discussion with arguments against secularism imported from the West. S. M. N. al-Attas insists that the Western secular worldview is dominant over the Muslim worldview and this undermines the Muslim's belief. He is one of the contemporary Muslim scholars who are against the influence of Western secularism. He has spent much of his time to explain the problem of desacralization of knowledge under the influence of the West. S. M. N. al-Attas believes that the crisis in the Muslim world today is not caused by politics or social conflicts but from the loss of the spiritual foundation in knowledge. So he insists that Muslim intellectuals have to involve themselves in the "Islamization" of knowledge. The "Islamization of knowledge" movement is one of the important contributions of al-Attas' Islamic philosophy.

Compared to S. H. Nasr, S. M. N. al-Attas has less philosophical debates with other philosophers. Wan Daud, as al-Attas' disciple, wrote books on S. M. N. al-Attas' Islamic Philosophy, especially the concept of Islamization of knowledge. Wan Daud, in his book *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad*