

"Clearing the Sludge of Islamophobia from Legitimate Concerns" (a preliminary statement) by Dr. A. Godlas, Feb. 17, 2013

A little recognized tragedy perpetrated by Islamophobic polemicists against the people of the world has been that many progressive Muslims have become preoccupied with cleaning up the sludge of Islamophobic hate speech instead of developing clear Muslim principles and spreading their application among Muslims in various problematic areas such as women's rights, law in general, democracy, non-violent socio-political change, intercultural respect and cooperation, and emotional intelligence. Nevertheless, countering and exposing the flaws in Islamophobic polemics and developing progressive applications of Islamic principles need not be seen as mutually exclusive activities for three main reasons dealing with the following: the nature of the false generalizations that characterize Islamophobic rhetoric, the very real problems in Muslim societies that underlie many Islamophobic generalizations, and the need for an emotionally intelligent reformation of Islam.

First, a unifying feature of Islamophobic rhetoric is that Islamophobic polemicists illegitimately generalize and apply to all Muslims and to Islam problems that are present in Muslim societies but that are not inherent in Islam and that are not true of all Muslims and are especially not true of a substantial percentage of Muslims in the U.S. That point must be made clear. Second, although these problems (such as those concerning various injustices in laws in general and concerning women in particular, democracy, non-violent socio-political change, and intercultural respect and cooperation) are real and present among Muslims to a degree, in fact they are due both to certain historical events and to the emotionally unintelligent defining of Islam, *sunna*, and *shari'a* as consisting primarily of certain fixed and eternally valid actions. Third, there is an alternative to such idolatrous rigidity; and that is, on the one hand, to regard as eternal and primary what the Qur'an refers to as firm (*muhkam*) principles, namely, clearly and repeatedly expressed general principles in the Qur'an and hadith, especially the Qur'anic principle of the necessity of using intelligence. On the other hand, the specific commands in the Qur'an or particular prophetic dictates and precedents should be regarded as important guidelines. Although in very

specific situations, when following such commands or precedents would clearly violate eternal principles, such specific precedents in those situations must nevertheless be abrogated (*mansukh*). In other words the eternal principles of the Qur'an and hadith must be applied situationally and progressively through ongoing use of the human intellect, understood as our ability to integrate revelation, prophetic example, rationality, and emotions (mind & heart) in order to achieve wisdom. Furthermore, in all humility, such wisdom will not guarantee that one will always discern the wisest action in any given situation, since we are not God. Nevertheless, in the long run, such wisdom will increase the likelihood of a positive and beautiful outcome. Hence, the use of the intellect (understood as our ability to integrate revelation, prophetic example, rationality, and emotions), I would argue is in fact the unchanging eternal *sunna* of Allah (Qur'an, 33:62 & 48:23) not the idols that today's imbecilic and criminal extremists claim to be Islam, to the delight of Islamophobic polemicists everywhere.