# Islamic Positivism and Scientific Truth

Clémentine Gutron, Baudouin Dupret

# ISLAMIC POSITIVISM AND SCIENTIFIC TRUTH

## Qur'an and Archeology in a Creationist Documentary Film[1]

Baudouin Dupret
Clémentine Gutron

Creationism is a religious doctrine that claims that the world is God's creation. "Scientific creationism" is a theory according to which the study of the origins of the natural and social worlds proves that they are not the product of evolution but of divine work. This theory has taken variegated forms which are function of the religious contexts of their formulation, among other things. Most of these forms share reject Darwinism, often understood in its truncated vulgate and its abusive social extension, but are not limited to this anti-evolutionist stance. The ambition of some of them is to prove that science, far from contradicting and opposing religion, actually confirms it. This is especially true in the case of Muslim creationism and its claim to Qur'an foreknowledge. In this perspective, creationism adopts a syllogistic type: divine revelation is truth; good science confirms truth; divine revelation is henceforth scientifically proven. Two truth orders are simultaneously mobilized and their convergence leads to their reciprocal reinforcement.

Adnan Oktar, alias Harun Yahya, is a prominent Muslim "creationist" figure, a predicate justified by his publication in 2006 of an *Atlas of Creation*, which was largely distributed in Europe and North America, and was condemned by the scientific and educational communities. His website hosts many texts and documentary films dealing with varied topics, stretching from natural sciences to social issues, via history and archeology. Among the documentary films, one finds "Evidence of the true faith in historical sources", which is the object of our analysis.[2]

[1] We are deeply indebted to Michael Lynch and Philippe Gonzalez for their generous, relevant and thorough critical reactions and comments to an early draft of this article.
[2] http://en.harunyahya.net/evidence-for-the-true-faith-in-historical-sources-video-harun-yahya-documentaries/

This is a small audiovisual production which, starting from some archeological files, seeks to demonstrate that Qur'an truth precedes science but is equally confirmed by it.

In this paper, we are not as much interested in demonstrating the falsity of creationist theses as in unpacking its argumentative mechanisms. In other words, it is not the truth value of the statements which is of prime interest for us but rather their capacity to produce a truth effect. We examine the organization of the scientific and religious argumentative repertoires and, in particular, what each of them takes as evidence and uses to gain an authoritative status. We also discuss how these repertoires draw upon, affect, and surreptitiously shift from one to another so as to reinforce their respective evidentiary power. It leads us to show how much this type of Muslim creationism constitutes a kind of scientism.

In order to argue along these lines, we examine in the first section the manner in which the relationship between religion and science was discussed in general before turning to this relationship in the Muslim context in particular. Then we describe different accommodation perspectives and we specifically present the case of Harun Yahya, the author of the documentary. In the second section, we go into the details of the latter's script and the textual-visual organization of the four historical chapters and their archeological evidence: Kingdom of Ebla's tablets, Abraham's documents in Mount Nimrod, the Seven plagues of Egypt, and Pharaoh's crossing of the Red Sea. The third section is devoted to the lexicon of truth and reality which is used in the documentary, as well as the many techniques which are used in it so as to give its general claim an authoritative status: grammar, sequentiality, organization of the narrative, intertwining of different voices (e.g. expert opinion), categorization devices, choice of pictures. In the concluding section, we discuss the way in which this kind of Muslim creationism organizes religious and scientific truths in a cumulative, redundant way. We show how it can be considered as a type of scientism, denying the autonomy of the magister of science and religion.

Just one word regarding the study of archeology before turning to Islamic intelligent design and the movie we selected in order to investigate creationist reasoning in action. The social study of archeology is a very specific case, since this science is an affiliate of both the natural and the human sciences. Archeology constitutes a paradigmatic case and a perspicuous setting for an inquiry into the practical use of scientific techniques and methods (e.g. Goodwin 2002) in order to make sense of past human activities (e.g. Latour and Lemonnier 1994). The material nature of archeological documents gives them the authority of authentic evidence, although the social nature of archeological inquiry compels it to borrow its sociological concepts from ethnology and history (Testart 2012: 150-197). According to Silberman (2008: 182), "any archeological statement–on a fact or a fiction–is also necessarily a statement of identity", which means that a claim regarding the past of a society has a direct impact on the ways in which it conceives of itself. This combination of natural and human sciences makes of archeology a most performing and even performative tool in a variety of legitimizing processes: nationalism (e.g. Diaz-Andreu and Champion 1996, Graves-Brown, Jones, Gramble 1996, Kohl, Kozelsk, Ben-Yehuda 2007); colonialism (e.g. Fawcett, Habu, Mastunaga 2008); racism (e.g. Gosden 2006, MacEachern 2006). Its motivation is sometimes ambiguous, as in the well-known case of Israeli archeology (e.g. Silberman 1993, Abu el-Haj 1998, Meskell 1998). Archeology was also often mobilized for religious reasons, so as to give scientific ground to statements originating in holy scriptures. Biblical and Jewish fundamentalist archeology are good examples of this use of the archeological science for religious purposes (e.g. Davis 2004).

The social study of archeology was concerned with what it calls the "abduction" of a scientific discourse for non-scientific purposes (e.g. Le Quellec 2009). Contrary to scholars militating for the scientificity of their discipline, who are interested in sorting out what is true and wrong in this type of archeological narratives (e.g. Adam 1975), research in the epistemic practices within archeology is concerned with what makes archeology scientific for

professional archeologists, what is constitutive of archeology for non-archeologists, what it is that makes something archeological for laypeople, what are the non-archeological purposes which can drive archeological arguments, and what are the (official and discrete) relationships between professional and naïve archeology (e.g. Stoczkowski 2000, Gutron 2011).

**An Islamic Version of Creationism**

The relationship between religion and science has a long, chaotic, conflicting history, although it was not before the 19th century that emerged the discourse pitting the one against the other (Shapin 1996, Ferngren 2002, Numbers 2009). To put it roughly, the debate turns around the issue of whether these truth programs complement, parallel, co-exist or contradict each other (Gould 1999, Stace 1952, Plantinga 2007).

Within Christian societies, there were historical controversies, which led to some of the most famous trials of the Inquisition, like Galileo's (Sharratt 1994). While initially opposing and even prosecuting what sounded contrary to its dogma and reading of the Holy Scriptures, the Catholic Church progressively and partially adapted its teaching, and eventually offered a nuanced version of separate, non-overlapping though not contradicting spheres. To put it in a nutshell, it might be said that the power of scientific discourse forced the Church to adapt its dogma towards "concordism", that is, the principle that religion and science do not oppose each other. Pope John Paul II addressing the Pontifical Academy of Science (1981), said: "The Bible itself speaks to us of the origin of the universe and its make-up, not in order to provide us with a scientific treatise, but in order to state the correct relationships of man with God and with the universe. Sacred Scripture wishes simply to declare that the world was created by God, and in order to teach this truth it expresses itself in the terms of the cosmology in use at the time of the writer". Scientific discoveries from the 17th century onward forced human *weltanschauung* to adapt, albeit in a different way, as the relationship between man and nature, and this led to

major theological shifts. Theism is one of this process' offshots, which combines religious teachings and modern science findings (Collins 2007).

It is mainly the theory of evolution that still stirs controversy between religion and science. Biological evolution is the main topic on which the public's religious reasons specifically oppose scientific consensus (Masci 2011).[3] Most literalist interpretations of the Scriptures lead to stating the incompatibility between Darwinism and Christian creationism, i.e., the contention that the world originates in creation as presented in the Genesis narrative. Scientific creationism is the branch of creationism that strives to provide scientific support for this thesis (Numbers 2006, Plavcan 2007). Intelligent design is the creationist theory according to which "certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection" (IDEAC 2004). In its present use, the term "intelligent design" was devised to escape the US Supreme Court's 1997 *Edward v. Aguillard* decision, which barred the teaching of creationism theories in public schools. ID theory is sometimes described as a "God-of-the-gaps" argument, which stresses the gaps in scientific knowledge and fills them with acts of God (the intelligent Designer) (Ratzsch 2010), although it does not specify what the latter is and to what extent the account of the Genesis should be treated in a literal way. According to its opponents, it is an argument from ignorance that wrongly uses the lack of evidence for one theory in order to prove the correctness of another theory.[4] It is indeed in the gaps in positive scientific knowledge, which are bridged or filled by theories and speculative hypotheses,[5] that "scientific creationism" proposes its alternate explanation, leaving intact what in science is now considered as a fact.

[3] Although more recently so called Young Earth views also target geology and cosmology.
[4] For a perspicuous investigation of Evangelism and its attitude vis-à-vis science, see Gonzalez and Stavo-Debauge (2015).
[5] As Drury (1973: 102) nicely puts it, in his Wittgensteinian way, there is no need for a theory when factual certainty is achieved. A theory is an interpretive means that gives a hypothetical explanation to something still partly or wholly ignored.

When turning to Islamic thought and history, it appears that the issue of the relationship between science and religion is old, complex and controversial. The very term of "science" deserves to be qualified as to its use for speaking of pre-modern times, but this is not what is at stake here. It is nowadays common knowledge to claim that the Islamic Golden Age witnessed the flourishing of various sciences like astronomy, algebra, geography, geometry and medicine, and eventually greatly inspired modern science through the introduction of empirical and experimental methods of inquiry (Grant 1996, Butterfield 1959). Without entering into complex debates, it must be said that there always existed in the Muslim traditions of thinking currents that advocated rational interpretations of the Scriptures as well as the idea that there exists two orders of truth, one divine and the other mundane (e.g. Averroes; see Leaman 1998). It is also generally admitted that "Islamic science" started declining around the 15$^{th}$ century AD, partly due to the "rise of a clerical faction which froze this same science and withered its progress" (al-Hassan and Hill 1986). When arriving in the Muslim world, modern science received a reception very different from enlightenment advocates and from conservative circles. For our present purposes, it is interesting to note that for Muslim scientists like Mehdi Golshani (2003: 52), it "was the transfer of various philosophical currents entangled with science that had a profound effect on the minds of Muslim scientists and intellectuals. Schools like Positivism and Darwinism penetrated the Muslim world and dominated its academic circles and had a noticeable impact on some Islamic theological doctrines."

Pure rejection of science has become rare in Muslim societies nowadays. On the other hand, after gaining some ground, attempts at substituting a scientific positivist worldview to the Islamic religious one retreated, to the point that it is often difficult to publicly present oneself as an atheist or even as an agnostic in most Muslim-majority countries. Contemporary Muslim attitudes vis-à-vis science can be categorized in four subgroups: those who seek to justify modern science on religious grounds; those who claim that the Qur'an had scientific

foreknowledge; those who advocate the building of a new theology allowing the re-interpretation of Islam in the light of modern science[6]; and finally those who separate the findings of modern science from its philosophical assumptions (Golshani 1998).

Qur'anic scientific foreknowledge can be considered as a most widespread public understanding of the relationship between science and Islam in contemporary Muslim societies. One of its major proponents was the French physician Maurice Bucaille (1976) who claimed that the Qur'an does "not contain a single statement which is assailable from a modern scientific point of view". This led him to the conclusion that the "facts" described in the Qur'an could not be have been authored by any human. The belief that Qur'an prophesized scientific theories and findings is widely popular: expansion of the universe, planetary motion, greenhouse effect, continental drift, and relativity are some of the many examples of what is claimed to have been predicted in the Islamic revelation. This is generally known as the "scientific miracle" (*i'jaz 'ilmi*) of the Qur'an (Dallal 2004). Among those prophecies, there are claims and predictions which are taken to have anticipated future events which actually took place (e.g. the Persian defeat by the Byzantine army in 627 AD) or documented past events which remained ignored until modern archeological science excavated their material evidence (e.g. Moses's traverse of the Red Sea; see infra).

In the Muslim world, like elsewhere, some creationists attempted to reconcile science and religion through e.g. the rejection of Darwinian theories of evolution as "false science". We must notice here that this viewpoint wrongly confounds biological and socio-cultural evolution under the same denomination of "Darwinism". This explains why Harun Yahya, in his documentary on archeological evidence of the truth of Qur'an, which opposes any evolutionary

[6] This is the case in the field of bioethics, where some scientists try to show how to read the scriptures in the light of the development of knowledge. See Dupret 2002 and Ghaly 2015.

conception of religion, considers it relevant to target the author of *The Origin of Species* together with materialist thinkers like Marx.

Some Muslim scholars signed the Discovery Institute's *A Scientific Dissent From Darwinism* petition (Edis 1999). Intelligent Design's conceptions of nature and the universe are widely respected among Muslims intellectuals and many ID books have been translated, in Turkey especially. Public meetings promoting ID were sometimes sponsored by the local government and ID prominent representatives were invited (Edis 2007). However, the term "intelligent design" is not much used by Muslim creationists to support their own assertions and it is even rejected by Harun Yahya as an "abstract and abstruse" way not to refer to God (*Allah*).

It is in this context that must be situated the life and work of Harun Yahya, the author of the documentary film on which we focus below. Born in 1956, Harun Yahya (Adnan Oktar under his original name) is a Turkish advocate of *i'jaz 'ilmi* literature and of Islamic creationism.[7] He became famous in Western countries in 2007 after having sent thousands of copies of his *Atlas of Creation*[8] to scientists, politicians, museums and schools. He is the president of the Science Research Foundation (Bilim Araştırma Vakfı [BAV], established 1990), which promotes creationism, and the National Values Preservation Foundation (Milli Değerleri Koruma Vakfı [MDKV], established in 1995), which works on the promotion of moral values. Although he has himself no credentials as a specialist in Islamic theology, he is an adept of Said Nursi, an influential Muslim scholar whose Qur'an commentary includes a comprehensive political and religious ideology. He studied interior architecture at the Mimar Sinan University Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul. As a Sunni zealot, he gathered around him young people belonging to socially-active and prosperous families of Istanbul who had become newly religious. According

[7] See Wikipedia entry "Adnan Oktar": http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adnan_Oktar.
[8] The title is one good reason if any why one can speak of "Islamic creationism" as a member's term.

to Edip Yüksel (2005), he presented his teachings, "a refined and urbanized version of Said Nursi", "to the children of the privileged class, without intimidating them."[9] He argued against Marxism and the Darwinian theory of Evolution because of its promoting materialism, atheism and derivative ideologies.[10] In 1986 he enrolled in the Philosophy Department of Istanbul University, attracting many university students, mostly from the prestigious Bosphorus University. Adnan Oktar's name began to appear regularly in the press, sometimes in the headlines. The same year he published a book titled *Judaism and Freemasonry* claiming that state offices, universities, political groups and media were influenced by a "hidden group". This was considered as an offense against the Turkish military regime and Oktar was arrested and charged with promoting a theocratic revolution for which he served a term in a prison and a mental hospital.

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, Oktar's group became more organized, while his message took on a Messianic form. He published many books and founded the Science Research Foundation, which targets "mass awareness concerning what the real underlying causes of social and political conflicts are."[11] Later, he established the Foundation for Protection of National Values. After the new military coup in 1999, Oktar was again arrested and charged with using threats for personal benefit and creating an organization with the intent to commit a crime, although the charges were eventually dismissed. Between that time and the present, BAV has organized hundreds of conferences on creationism in Turkey and worldwide. He built a large publishing enterprise with publications sold worldwide and even a TV channel. In 2010,

[9] Nursi is known for having said that "scientific practice is the best religious practice, since scientific progress broadens our knowledge in God"; and "science and religion are the two pillars of the perfect man" (see Mardin 1989).

[10] It must be noted that this combat against Darwin and Marxism is also linked to the use of these authors by Turkish leftist movements to sustain their political struggle.

[11] "About the SRF". Srf-tr.org. Retrieved 10 April 2012. This campaign against secularism and in favor or the return to religious values in public life is a feature Harun Yahya shares with ID promoters.

Oktar was selected as one of the top fifty most influential Muslims in the world by the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre of Jordan.

Adnan Oktar's penname, Harun Yahya, refers to the Biblical figure of Aaron and to the New Testament one of John the Baptist. It reflects his insistence on God's unicity (*tawhid*) and effort to teach to non-believers Islam as the seal of all prophecies. On his website, Harun Yahya exposes a genealogical tree relating him to Islam's Prophet Muhammad. All his books on science-related topics stress the might, sublimity, and majesty of God. A sub-set of this production aims at the critique of materialism, evolution, Darwinism, and atheism. Harun Yahya's books are lavishly produced, on good-quality paper with abundant full-color illustrations, and are often made into high-resolution videos freely downloadable on the Internet. The close relationship between Christian and Islamic creationisms dates back to the 1980s. For many years Oktar drew on the writings of Christian creationists to develop his case against evolution. His work became more and more similar to ID and his website was listed as an "Islamic intelligent design" website by the Discovery Institute (Harrison 2010). Under the BAV's umbrella Oktar launched many campaigns against Darwinian theories, but their funding remains unknown. The most famous campaign of this kind started with the publication of *Yaratılış Atlası* (*The Atlas of the Creation*) in 2006 and 2007, accompanied by a dedicated website. Tens of thousands of copies of the book have been delivered throughout Europe and the United States. It received unanimous disapproval from the academic community. Gerdien de Jong, a biologist at Utrecht University who received a copy of the book, has described its reasoning as "absurdly ridiculous" (Enserink 2007: 925a). Today, Harun Yahya is a brand which mobilizes amazing production machinery. His website addresses a broad audience in many languages, presents more than 100 documentary films, and offers a selection of 50 books. He is also the head of a TV channel which features him, some would say, in a quasi-Prophetic stance (Solberg 2013: 8). In the field of archeology, Harun Yahya selects events alluded to in

the Qur'an, something which gives them some independent historical credibility that science is asked to confirm.

**The script**

Harun Yahya's documentary film provides us with a perspicuous example of a creationist usage of science. Although Darwinian and materialist doctrines are targeted in many segments of the film, as the two faces of the same atheistic coin, evolutionism is not the primary enemy of this production; instead, the film is more about the scientific verification of historical events reported in the Qur'an. One finds here the classical ingredients of what was ironically called pseudo-archeology (e.g. Feder 1996, Stoczkowski 1999, Fagan 2006, Le Quellec 2011): claims suggesting, more than proving; conclusions which are stated, more than argued; scant and partial state of the art; cosmologic theses. However, we are not interested in sorting out the right and the wrong in this production. What we look for is the description of the arguments which make it an attempt at scientifically validating the Qur'an. This raises questions as to the nature of religion and science in their public understanding, their epistemic status, their capacity to consolidate each other, and eventually the paradigmatic shift making their accommodation possible.

The documentary film we analyze is easily accessible via Harun Yahya's website (http://www.harunyahya.com/en). Titled "Evidence for the true faith in historical sources", it is composed of pictures excerpted from fiction, animated and archive movies, as well as maps and archeological objects. Accordingly, it functions as a photographic album in which a series of pages/slides succeed each other. Every slide is accompanied by a text read and eventually subtitled. The whole film is dramatically set to music typical of *peplum* movies or videogames (in the manner of *Age of Empires*).

The film's script has a simple structure. Raising some historical enigmas, it claims they were solved through recent archeological research. Then it states its central thesis, which is that these truths established by science confirm the truths already established in the Qur'an. Four chapters are dedicated to sustaining this thesis: Ebla's tablets, Mount Nimrod, Egypt's seven plagues, Pharaoh's crossing of the Red Sea. The conclusion invites the spectator, on the basis of these chapters, "to see the evident signs", which is a direct quotation of the Qur'an (*al-ayatu al-mubina*). Here is an excerpt of the introductory sequence:

> How were Pharaoh and his army drowned? / […] What was the hidden truth in the tablets of Ebla? / […] Historical sources and archeological findings continue to reveal the accuracy of the descriptions given in the Qur'an. / One of the most distinct miracles of the Quran is the accuracy of information in the verses that reveal historical events. Contemporary archeological findings and historical sources confirm the events as revealed in the verses of the Quran. / […] Thanks to contemporary archival research and archeological discoveries, just about all these events described in the Qur'an have become "visible" and "knowable." / In this film, we will examine some of the results of modern archeological investigations and historical sources that will highlight and provide evidence for the emergence of the truth as revealed by the verses of the Quran. / At the same time, we will witness the manifestation of Almighty Allah's promise in the Qur'an. / Say: 'Praise be to Allah. He will show you His Signs and you will recognize them… ' (Surat an-Naml, 93)

The introduction thus takes the following pattern: historical enigmas, scientific answers, Qur'an confirmation. It is already interesting to notice that the scheme is so conceived that it is the science which states the truth and the Qur'an which confirms it, and not the other way around, although elsewhere the questions are raised in the sacred text and answered by archeology. Each case is presented as one chapter of a volume concerning the convergence between archeological science and revealed truth.

The first chapter concerning Ebla's tablets proceeds in the following way. It starts by stating its argument: rehearsal of the tablets' discovery; mention in these tablets of three prophetic names long before their mention in the Torah; truth of divine scriptures. This argument is then

repeated point by point in a way that does not refine it but expands upon each of its parts. First, regarding the tablets, some elements are given about the conditions of their excavation, the history of Ebla kingdom, the deciphering of the Eblite language, the importance of the discovery. Secondly, to the names of Abraham, David and Ismail given in introduction, it adds the identification of places (Sinai, Gaza, Jerusalem, Sodom, Gomorrah, Irem), that all share the particularity of not having been named except in religious texts. Thirdly, it comes out of the syllogism that documentary truth confirms divine truth, but also that the human religious mind always believed in the one God and has therefore no evolutionary character, contrary to the theses Harun Yahya attributes to Darwinian theories. The chapter concludes with a citation from the Qur'an.

The second chapter deals with the existence of the text Abraham received from God and which is supposed to be buried on Mount Nimrod. It starts with the statement that "historical and archeological discoveries show that the Middle East was a pagan region in the time of the Prophet Abraham." However, right after and contrary to the former chapter, it gives the Islamic narrative regarding Abraham's prophecy, according to which God sent texts down to him. The film claims that "it is the Qur'an[12] that gives us the most accurate information about the prophet Abraham." Then comes the archeological part of the argument. This is purely hypothetical, as these texts were never discovered and are only "believed to lie within the 2500-year-old remains on Mount Nimrod, in the region of Adiyaman in South-East Turkey." Nevertheless, the film goes on saying that "it may well be that a future investigation using advanced technology will uncover these highly important historical documents." This claim is said to be grounded on evidence coming from historical sources and archeological excavations, as recognized by

[12] The parallel one can draw between the Qur'an and the Bible is evident here. However, Harun Yahya does not refer to the latter, but only to the former. It must be reminded that, in classical Islamic doctrine, Muhammad is presented as the Seal of all prophecies and the Qur'an as the direct Word of God, which corrected all what preceded.

UNESCO. In particular, one is told there is a consensus among archeologists about the existence of a tomb chamber inside the mountain itself, where "the discoveries to be made can be expected to reveal very important information concerning the history of religions."

The story of the seven plagues of Egypt constitutes the third chapter, which starts with papyruses and hieroglyphs, and their translation in the 19th century after the discovery of the Rosetta stone. One specific papyrus, written by Ipuwer, conserved in Leiden and translated by Gardiner in 1909, is deemed to reveal that his author had personally witnessed the plagues. The crux of this chapter is that "the historical information in the papyrus regarding the disasters that struck the people of Egypt was in complete agreement with the reports given in the Qur'an" in Surat al-A'raf. The documentary proceeds then to the comparison between Ipuwer's admonitions and relevant verses of the Qur'an, with the conclusion that "this papyrus, the contents of which only came to light in the 20th century, is exceedingly important evidence that once again shows how the Qur'an is truly the word of our Lord."

The fourth and last chapter deals with "the secret of the Prophet Moses' crossing of the Red Sea." It starts with the quotation of verses 63-68 of Surat al-Shu'ara: "Strike the sea with your staff.' And it split in two, each part like a towering cliff. And We brought the others right up to it. We rescued Moses and all those who were with him. Then We drowned the rest. There is certainly a sign in that yet most of them didn't believe. Truly your Lord is the Almighty, the Most Merciful." This miracle was the subject of considerable research, which was eventually "scientifically explained" with a "mathematical" account of how the rock bed was laid bare as the winds pushed the water aside, and published in the *Bulletin of the Russian Academy of Sciences*. The conclusion of the chapter is that God, because of His compassion and support for believers, can decide at His choosing to produce a miracle in which all scientific conditions are met.

The documentary film concludes with the repetition of its master-idea: "Being able to see the evident signs":

> Throughout the course of history our Almighty Lord has sent envoys to show people the true path, some of whom are referred to in Holy Scriptures from His Own Presence. / […] The information contained within the divine scriptures that appeared nowhere else when these holy scriptures were revealed are corroborated by historical documents that have only been brought to light using modern technology in recent archeological discoveries and research. / […] These proofs corroborate the testimony of the Qur'an. These proofs are important and will greatly excite believers and increase their faith and enthusiasm.[13] / In the Qur'an our Almighty Lord has promised that He will show people such proofs both in their own natures and in the outside world: / We will show them Our Signs on the horizon and within themselves until it is clear to them that it is the truth. Is it not enough for your Lord that He is a witness of everything? (Surat al-Fussilat, 53)

In sum, historical and archeological discoveries are used to corroborate the Qur'an, which itself testifies to God and His truth (the God-Truth, *al-Haqq*), Whose evidences can be found in Humanity (the topic of this documentary film) as well as in Nature (the topic of many other documentaries). These evidences are the "evident signs" revealed by God, something that means both the signifying and the signified, as the Arabic word "*ayat*" refers to the evidence as well as to the Qur'an verses which reveal divine evidence.

## Categorization and authority

Many techniques are used in the documentary so as to give its general claims an authoritative status. It is often done in an intertextual way, which intertwines expert speech and the divine word, the truth of the former drawing from, or supporting, the truth of the latter, and the other way around. Through the embedding of their respective voices, authority effects are not only produced but also reinforced.

[13] One sees here incidentally that the audience which is targeted is not only composed of non-believers but also of believers needing scientific support to their faith.

The documentary genre is characterized by a specific language and grammar. It plays on intertwined repertoires of reality, truth and plausibility, allowing quick shifts to and from one another. In the way it associates pictures, voice, texts and music in a sequence, and it also produces a "natural intelligibility". Indeed, this film creates a structure of relevance directly (though perhaps imperfectly) available to an ordinarily competent audience. Such an audience understands this normatively/morally organized documentary through normatively/morally constituted sense-making practices. Our analysis of the structure of intelligibility of this science-and-religion movie shows how it produces, and is produced by, a master narrative whose interpretative method is reflexive, that is, retrospectively grounded on what is "known in common" and prospectively oriented to the further inferences it makes possible. This film is meant to be watched and understood, and it is even over-determined (Livingston 1995) in that respect. It is directly accessible to "ordinarily competent" viewers, who see it with their everyday epistemic resources (Jayyusi 1984: 289). This is accentuated by the fact that it does not engage into subtle epistemological distinctions between facts, theories and evidence, but on the contrary conflates the lexicons of reality, truth and probability in one and the same register.

Taken in isolation, actions-within-pictures have both a "glance-availability" and an independent trajectory. Carefully studying at time $t^0$ an object through the prism of a microscope comprehends the evident though invisible idea that there was a specimen to study at time $t^{-1}$ and implicates the evident though invisible idea that there is a scientific outcome of this examination at time $t^{+1}$. This Gestalt structure triggers categorization devices reaching far beyond direct visual availability (Jayyusi 1991). In our example, it carries a knowledge categorization device following which a material puzzle can be solved through the use of scientific techniques. These 'one-shot narratives' have a kind of allusiveness which animates what is made visible within the frame. A scientific glance is not a simple glance; it is a glance that leads to outcomes which must be taken as true. In other words, all these photographs are

not read in a vacuum; there is always some context that provides for what is intended by the author, for the readability of the film. For instance, selecting the channel or the website on which I watch the film is a constraining feature of my watching this film: it provides for the context of this film's intelligibility, while simultaneously, the film itself provides for the channel's or website's categorization.

The many pictures are ordered in a sequential way, i.e. in juxtaposition with each other for the specific purposes of the film. For instance, one realizes that not only is Pharaoh's army engaged in the pursuit of Moses and the Hebrews, and facing its subsequent drowning into the floods of the Red Sea, but also that this little sequence is itself embedded within a broader narrative, which is also sequentially organized and tells us that, in a geographically identified place, an historical event took place, and that this event is accounted for in the Qur'an and scientifically explained by oceanographers, which shows in conclusion that what is said in the Prophetic revelation can be proven scientifically. These sequences are both distinct from, and constitutive of, the global narrative. It reveals how far the whole product is a laminated object, with the many implicit and explicit trajectories of shots, sequences and global narrative intertwined in a complex grammar.

If shots convey a proper meaning that is embedded in their piecemeal and sequential organization, the sum of these sequences thus produces a global narrative, which can be summarized as: "there are things which are told in the Qur'an; these things are scientifically confirmed or explained; therefore the Qur'an is scientifically true and science is religiously valid.[14] This global narrative should be understood in terms of a Gestalt production, that is, the unfolding of some details in a story which gain prominence according to their significance in the understanding of the general whole, while other details are confined to the background and

[14] While any science showing the opposite is rejected as pseudoscience.

actually disappear from the narrative. For instance, one can see pictures of several excavations and archeological discoveries whose specifics (who, when, what) can be forgotten (although they can be more or less easily recognized) provided that we understand them as delineating the whole scheme of archeology at work to show historical truth. Some details of the many shots and sequences take a particular relevance because of the place they occupy and the function they achieve within the global narrative, while other details do not and are therefore discarded.

Our documentary film presents itself as a puzzle-solution device (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986). By combining words and pictures, the movie sets up a puzzle in the minds of the spectators. Then, progressively, it presents the elements which together provide for the solution. These elements are organized in a syllogistic way: (1) factual discoveries made by archeology (or stories narrated in the Qur'an); (2) Qur'an's foreknowledge of these facts (or scientific factualizing of these stories); (3) science and Qur'an confirm each other.[15] The three-part structure of the syllogism and the simple character of the message invite an alignment of both editor and audience on the type of narrative they expect from each other. When the syllogism ends with a Qur'anic verse, its positioning makes it the lens through which all that precedes has to be read—one might call it, paraphrasing Garfinkel (1967), a documentary method of understanding of an Islamic kind. However, it is sometimes science that concludes the syllogism. In that case, one can reasonably argue that the documentary method of understanding is more of a scientist's kind.

As explicitly stated in its title, "Evidence of the true faith" aims at promoting one specific narrative, which we call, following Lynch and Bogen (1996), a master-narrative. Imposing one

[15] As Michael Lynch told me when discussing this paper, this syllogism is the kind of inductive confirmation that Popper attacked. In arguments in the USA about Christian creationism, Popper was frequently invoked to dismiss such confirmation of Biblical events.

master-narrative is no self-evident undertaking but a contested process. Of course, there can be many coexisting master-narratives but only in separate spheres of relevance. A master-narrative is established against the background of other preexisting and possible or reasonable narratives. In our case, Evolutionist and Materialist narratives constitute this straw enemy. Indeed, in a sort of mirror game, a master-narrative is necessarily the counter-narrative of another master-narrative. It does not mean that the scripts of opposed master-narratives prove completely different from one another. Actually, this creationist documentary shares with its avowed enemy, i.e. evolutionist theories, the same valuation of science (to the point that we characterized it as scientistic). Therefore, it is not the idea of science that is at stake, but its combination with religion (which is at best indifferent to non-religious documentary producers), and, even more important, the incumbents of "good/true science" ("bad/wrong science" being the science that denies evidences of the true faith as provided by both good science and religious scriptures).

The documentary genre constitutes a remarkable truth-stating engine. It is able to produce its intelligibility in an organized manner and with persuasion techniques which draw upon narratives naturally grounded in reality. Although it is the outcome of montage, it pretends to describe reality through e.g. the use of (a) categorizations, (b) the embedding of "naturally-captured" sequences, (c) the referring to "plausible fiction", and (d) the soliciting of "expertise".

a) Throughout the whole documentary, categorization devices operate to produce truth effects. Many categorizations are used to index persons, collectivities, objects, events, activities, etc. They are often organized in collections of items perceived as sharing family resemblances. For instance, Pharaoh is combined with pagan; sky, clouds and mountains with God; a pointing finger with scientific demonstration; journal titles with accuracy. These categories are situationally selected according to praxiological criteria of adequacy (a frightened face illustrates well the suffering of ancient Egyptians), the recipient-designed

configuration (the audience to which the documentary is addressed), and the implicative potential (the use of technology) indicates the accuracy of findings. In sum, it is an issue of assembling items in a way which is relevant for the purposes of the narrative.

Categorization devices are organized according to two major axes: relationships and knowledge. One finds firstly the collections of categories organized in relational pairs (e.g. "Muslims/pagans", "labs/scientists"), that is, doublets referring to relations between persons, things, or persons and things. Secondly, collections organized around knowledge associate scholars and laypeople. The former are the owners, because of their knowledge, of special or exclusive rights in the dealing with specific issues, like the explanation of a natural phenomenon. The latter categories, in our case, do not appear on screen but are assigned the status of the film's targeted audience. The categories of a collection are (potentially) descriptive (for instance: an archeologist at a dig is capable of making discoveries). They are also inferentially adequate: moral qualities, rights and duties can be ascribed to category members on this basis (especially the scientist's contribution to truth finding). And they have a programmatic relevance: the failure to respect of rights or duties incumbent to the category constitutes a noticeable breach (for instance, the lack of humility of ancient Egyptians violates their duties vis-à-vis God and infers the motives of His visiting doom upon them).

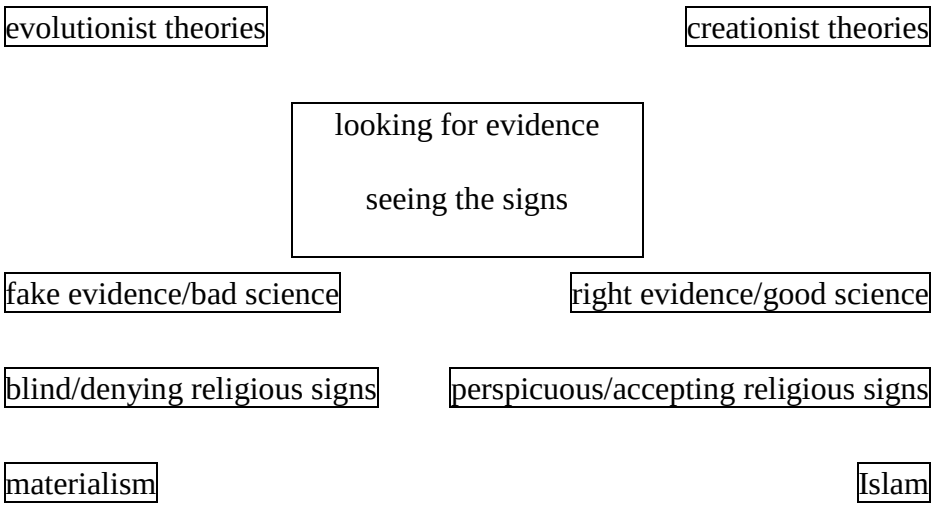
Several issues follow from this organization around categorizations: conventional implications of the selections operated (e.g.: pointing to science implicates accuracy); inferential consequences of the selections operated (e.g.: Nimrod's lack of humility invites Abraham's ridicule of him); and the use of categorial knowledge in the production of descriptions (e.g.: categorizing ancient Egyptian people as pagans describes them as the normal incumbents of God's anger). We thus see how activities are category bound: there is a way in which their accomplishment by their incumbents is expected and considered as adequate. Hence

too, the fact that striving for scientific truth is a duty linked to the category of being a good Muslim.

Membership categorizations proceed in a way which is both moral and normative. This is the case of prejudices and stereotypes, whose functioning is transitive: some member of a categorial group is considered as its representative, although it is not an organized community, and is ascribed all of its features and is therefore bound to the attributes commonly associated to this category. In our film, being characterized as a pagan, a Muslim or a scientist makes of the person the owner of the generic properties of this group. Of course, the ascription of a collective predicate to some knowledge or doctrinal corpus is not an issue of empirically valid imputation, but the establishment of a property relationship (Sharrock 1974). The attribute given to the corpus is rather a descriptive device. One might speak of a halo of descriptive relevance (Dupret 2011). Characterizing science as conforming to Islam or Islam as conforming to science opens the semantic field as well as it creates a programmatic relevance.

There is a whole moral grammar operating here, composed of identities, causes, motives, from which a web of meanings proceeds under the guise of informing, documenting and reporting. This grammar is often organized around disjunctive pairs, like for instance "blind/perspicuous". The choice of one part of the pair rather than the other has such implications that subsequent discourse can be inferred and managed consequently. Indeed, each part of this categorial pair conveys a bunch of conventional presuppositions such as: "fake evidence → bad science → blind to truth → materialist"; or "right evidence → good science → perspicuous to truth → Muslim". The choice of a category is thus not only descriptive, but also implies certain commitments in terms of belief, which are contradictory, with all the epistemic consequences deriving from it. In this perspective, it is not difficult to show that what demarcates Harun Yahya's creationism from his supposedly Darwinian enemies is not the

rejection of science but the equivalence he draws between religious signs and scientific proof, turning that equivalence into a criterion for what constitutes right and fake evidence.




b) Reality and truth effects[16] are also produced throughout the film. We find the former in the embedding of "naturally-captured" pictures and sequences. This is the case in the different scenes in which an archeologist is engaged in the action of discovering or an epigraphist in the action of deciphering. The "Evidence of the true faith" documentary is based on many pictures excerpted from archives that were not taken for the purpose of the film itself. Their leaning on the truth-value of documentary images actually increases their evidentiary power, since they cannot be discarded as mere staging, but are on the contrary grounded in historical events and real-time coverage. By so doing, pictures in the spot give the impression of accounting for the real, instead of creating a fiction.

In our film, voice (and subtitles) and images are joined in a sequential and intertextual framework in order to produce the documentary, i.e. the documented argument. Actually, the image is found to be confined to the role of paraphrase and commentary on the narration.

[16] Reality effects are these visual and textual devices through which a narrative conveys the impression that what takes place in e.g. a film is related to our common, familiar world, while truth effects are devices of the same kind through which the narrative seeks to persuade the audience that what is said can be trusted or believed in. Both effects are intimately related and serve similar functions and purposes. See also Barthes (1968).

However, this technically ancillary status of the image in no way detracts from the fact that it plays a fundamental role in the film, which is that of confirmation and accreditation of the stories related by the narration. Original images seem to come in directly, without mediation, so that our senses are able to perceive things as if we were in the location and in the place of the camera. The technology that supports every filming operation tends to erase the conditions endogenous to its production, so much and so well that the document produced appears, finally, natural, obvious, and self-validating.

c) As for truth effects, they also produced through the use of fictional pictures. The staging of mythical places, people and prototypes has the capacity to induce their historicity. This is achieved by the embedding of sequences excerpted from cinema movies of a realistic style. Realistic does not mean historically accurate; it refers to the production of the many features that make it easy for the spectator to locate the place, the time and the story in which it takes place. It relates the spectator to what is known in common: Pharaohs heading the two crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt; Roman soldiers protected by easily recognizable helmets and armor; Biblical prophets wearing long beards and holding a staff; etc. These are not necessarily historically or archeologically validated characteristics of ancient societies, but they correspond to the stereotypes surrounding them and, because of this redundancy, confirm their reality.

There are fact-establishment practices consisting of recursive stances of accounting for the same story, with the same personages and the same details concurring in the production of an iconic picture of some past reality. The reality-like nature of these fictions is conditional upon their capacity to induce their likeliness and plausibility. Nobody doubts that Zefirelli's staging of the life of Christ is not an historical account; it is nevertheless organized in a way that makes it possible to consider it as an authentic perspective, a probing fiction. We all know that every detail of the film is created, articulated, staged and edited, but the assemblage of all these details

leads to the production of a *Gestalt* picture which tells us a story whose face value fits our culturally spontaneous expectations (see Veyne 1983: 32).

d) The documentary enumerates things that "do exist", which are anchored in reality. It is grounded on "expertise" through the quotation of scholars, short sequences showing scientists at work, archives of archeological excavations, pictures of historical and archeological artifacts, 3D reconstitutions, maps, etc. There are many references made to the scientific community. Names are quoted, like Giovanni Pettitano, the specialist of Ebla, "who is an expert in ancient writing at Rome University", Alan Henderson Gardiner, who translated the Ipuwer papyri, or the Russian mathematicians Volzinger and Androsov, who "provided mathematical proof of the possibility of the Prophet Moses' (pbuh)[17] dividing of the Red Sea". Through their scientific achievements, these scientists made knowledge available to lay viewers, and reference is made to "actual" articles or books which "do exist" and can be consulted, as illustrated by the cover pages of various publications (*Reader's Digest* magazine, *Bulletin of the Russian Academy of Sciences*) which are accumulated and therefore cumulate their probing force. Accuracy is achieved through the indexing of time (e.g. the discovery of Ebla tablets took place in 1975) and place via the use of maps, like the one locating the Kingdom of Ebla, which "consisted of part of south-eastern Turkey and part of Mesopotamia and extended as far as south of Damascus, in Syria". Quotations from the manuscripts (Ebla archives, Ipuwer papyri) also testify to the scientificity of what is claimed. Finally, quantitative data are also used to lend credibility to what is said (e.g. "The importance of this discovery was highlighted when a library consisting of 20,000 tablets and fragments written in cuneiform were found '; "around 600,000 could then have crossed the 7 kilometers to the other side in some 4 hours"); and hyperbolic statements as to the importance of specific discoveries (e.g. "The discovery of the Kingdom of Ebla in 1975 was regarded as one of the greatest and most important discoveries of classical

[17] Abbreviation meaning in English-written Islamic texts: "Peace be upon him!"

archeology"; "The area is today regarded by many international organizations, including UNESCO, as one of the world's most important cultural treasure houses") serve to stress the force of the argument justifying the production of this film and guiding its organization.

The use of the "scientific voice" incorporates the authority of expertise to assert the validity of the truth claims which are proffered in the film; it contributes to the surplus of veracity about what is claimed by the film director. The inclusion of scientific reported speech allows the film director to attribute the authority of his argument to an instance whose authority is unchallengeable since it is deemed to reflect things as they are and not as one thinks they are. In that respect, much depends on the establishment of the expert's credibility. It can even be said that the expert's credibility functions as a substitute for truth (Lynch 1998). What is said is true because it was said by somebody whose status implies that (s)he says true things, although it often appears that expertise proceeds from commonsense techniques rather than from a scientific knowledge proving what it claims. In other words, expertise is a major resource of the documentary, which in turn transforms it into an expert account. All the commonsense features of science, expertise and scientists are mobilized in order to give the spectator access to knowledge as if being oneself an expert at work.

The documentary consists in the production of a narrative thread of relevance which, through the association of ideas, inferences and connotations, gives the spectator an authoritative argument to which (s)he cannot but eventually subscribe. Different artifacts contribute to the factuality of the claims; various scientific testimonies contribute to their validity. At the end, the documentary produces a normative account which presents itself as an evident truth, all the less challengeable that it proceeds from the sum of "evidences" preceding the conclusion. Through the iteration of correspondence between what is claimed, showed and said, it produces veracity and authenticity, whatever the techniques and assumptions underlying these authoritative statements.

Relevance is achieved through iteration. Since Schütz (1990), we know that relevance is not inherent in nature as such but the result of human selective and interpretative activity. Documentaries are the product of a practice of selection, production, ordering and hierarchization of "real" information. Various techniques are mobilized for this purpose, and contribute to the production of an instructed relevance; that is, an order imposed in such a way that the film seems to proceed from the factual objectivity of natural and historical truths. To be sure, this relevance can only operate in the context of a background of understanding shared by the film director and his audience. At the same time, it is Harun Yahya who, by means of his website and documentary films, produces this background. In that sense, the film is organized in a way which both documents its argument and is documented by the type of reasoning from which it proceeds and to which it orients.

**Redundant, cumulative truth**

*Seeing The Evident Signs* is a documentary film seeking to show that science and Qur'an, far from opposing, actually duplicate each other, as alternative versions of the same truth. In that sense, they do not constitute different truth programs – science and Islam – but only one and the same – science-qua-Islam – which presents itself as a paradigmatic shift from its self-ascribed enemy: materialism. There is only one truth, which is exposed in Qur'an: "good science" is the science which is redundant with this truth, it is therefore Qur'anic science. In that sense, science comes here to confirm Islamic revelation. However, many aspects of Qur'an cannot be understood outside the frame of science; they need science as their interpretive key. In that second sense, it is Islamic revelation which confirms a scientific truth. In this last section, we firstly examine this conception of science, Islam, and science-qua-Islam; secondly we consider the extent to which this is a kind of scientism, which therefore shares with other type of scientisms an argumentative family resemblance.

Most of Harun Yahya's documentary films address issues of science in their capacity to corroborate (as in the case of Ebla tablets), explain (the case of Moses' crossing of the Red Sea) or document (the case of Ipuwer papyri) what the Qur'an has literally revealed. In other words, it is the convergence and even the redundancy of these two truth programs that is stressed. It is often postulated that science and religion oppose each other, and there are indeed many historical situations where, like in ancient Greece, "the field of knowledge was turned upside down by the creation of new powers of affirmation (historical investigation and speculative physics) that competed with myth and, unlike it, expressly offered the alternative between true and false" (Veyne 1988: 24). However, this is not the case with *Seeing The Evident Signs*, which stages the two sides of one and the same coin: truth. In other words, Qur'an and science do tell us the same, although in a different way and style. Harun Yahya's conception of science is positivist, cumulative and unidirectional. It corresponds to this a-historical and formalistic philosophy of science, which Kuhn (1962) systematically denies (Hacking 1983; Sharrock and Read 2002). Harun Yahya sees science as a stockpiling of results advancing towards the full and final truth (to the point that, if it is *not yet* the case that some point is scientifically proven, it is said that it *will be* the case). Science is hypostatized, its findings are non-contradictory, its truth is unquestionable; it is the access to the one and unique Truth. As science is a device used to prove Qur'an's truth, it cannot be but true. It could not have the status of evidence of divine truth if it was not *as* true as the Qur'an. Like God, science is almighty, it is the truth, unique and exclusive of alternates.

One faces a resolutely "modern" way of reasoning by which the authority of divine revelation is supported by the scientific magister (see e.g. the excerpt where it is said that it "shows how the Qur'an is truly the word of our Lord"). The Qur'an is presented as being in need of science to show that it is true. This is pure materialism: strange phenomena are not miracles but scientific facts. They only seem unnatural, but there is necessarily a scientific

explanation. Actually, it is only the Qur'an which is miraculous, as it reveals things that were otherwise unknowable at that time. Religion is looked upon in a positivist manner. The text of the Qur'an is presented as a scientific article positing a positive truth. Qur'an verses are quoted as pieces of evidence. The quotation of the Qur'an is equivalent to a bibliographical reference. Actually, Harun Yahya has a conception of religion which is equivalent to that of Frazer (1894) or Evans-Pritchard (1965) regarding magic. Our point is of course not to equate these two authors, and even less to caricature Evans-Pritchard's sophisticated approach to the Zande oracle. However, it is worth mentioning that, according to the latter, magic is a conception of nature which is both theoretical (its functioning) and technical (its mastery). The difference with Harun Yahya is that, whereas Frazer and Evans-Pritchard take magic as an error whose detection leads ultimately to the emergence of science – "a golden key that opens many locks in the treasury of nature" (Frazer 1894: Ch.69 §4) – Harun Yahya considers the Qur'an as a truth that the emergence of science eventually corroborates. But Frazer, Evans-Pritchard and Yahya all consider religion as an attempt at explaining the world; they share a proto-scientific conception of religion. They look at religion through the lens of positivist-scientific thinking. Religion is not taken as a specific language game embedded within a particular form of life (Wittgenstein 2000) or as a practice through which humans acknowledge contingency (Winch 2007), but as a hypothetic-deductive, quasi-scientific formulation which is either wrong (Frazer, Evans-Pritchard) or true (Yahya), but is nevertheless in an internal relationship of coherence within the same language as science. In sum, Harun Yahya's conception was made possible by the emergence of modern science and the window to a positivist philosophy of religion it opens. Incidentally, it shows that Frazer's and Evans-Pritchard's conceptions of magic and religion, which were rightly criticized by Wittgenstein and Winch as promoting mistaken general theories and categories, do nevertheless correspond to particular understandings of religion which specifically appeared in the wake of positivism. To be sure,

this kind of religious positivism is possible only in relation to scriptures whose meaning can be presented as scientific foreknowledge in an unfalsifiable way.[18]

In Harun Yahya's terms, Qur'an and science are different paths leading to the same truth. Contrary to the legendary worlds of the ancient Greeks, which "were accepted as true in the sense that they were not doubted, but they were not accepted the way that everyday reality is" (Veyne 1983: 17), Yahya's believes in Islam as he believes in science, because they both belong to the same truth, that of Nature qua God's will. God is here the creator of everything, including nature and its intelligibility through science; including the world and its intelligibility through the Qur'an. God offers to humans the signs to see the truth of both Qur'an and science. These signs are evident, they are there, under our eyes; it suffices to see. It follows thereof that science and Qur'an cannot contradict each other as they both proceed from the same will of God to give us the capacity to see. Via these two ways, we see the same thing, which is the Creator's work as He wants us to see it. It is a "prochronical" explanation in the sense of a creation imagined by God in a full-fledged way, as in Ph.H. Gosse's *Omphalos* (see Gould 1985). Note that neither scientific nor religious truth is submitted to the other's critique, as they both function in an autonomous way. When they meet, it is to duplicate their respective truth. Otherwise, it is considered as false science, in the same way as there are false religions. And in this scheme, archeology is solicited in order to confirm Qur'an's truth, even when it has not yet achieved its discovery, on the argument that, when the discovery will take place, it will naturally confirm the truth already established in the Qur'an. In other words, whereas the Qur'an has scientific foreknowledge, science has an evidential power through anticipation. In this way, the argument is unfalsifiable, since any further discovery cannot take place, except in the sense of confirming the initial hypothesis: science makes or will make "events described in the Qur'an … 'visible'

[18] On Wittgenstein's "religious point of view" and Winch's perspective in that respect, see Malcom (1993 and 2014), the latter including an excellent essay by M. Le Du.

and ‘knowable’.” Consequently, believers have all the more reason to believe: “The Qur’an is such a scripture that there is no doubt”; “The unearthing of these historical documents and scientific evidence regarding the truth of these reports, reveal another miraculous aspect of the Holy Quran”.

Harun Yahya’s creationism proposes a positivist, scientistic conception of science and religion to the point that one can speak of science-qua-religion.[19] It has a cumulative, unfalsifiable, one-truth-oriented quasi-bigoted understanding of science: facts are scientifically established and thus exist objectively, independent of any context of valuation. At the same time, it proposes an interpretive paradigm in which every single empirical piece is ascribed a place in a puzzle whose design is God-made though literally accessible through the Qur’an. To put it in a nutshell, it is a speculative assemblage of material evidence. More exactly, it is “retro-speculative” in the sense that it claims its design was already exposed, though not fully understood: it is not about looking for something hidden, but about discerning the features and contours of something formerly revealed. It does not directly manipulate its data, but it takes attitudinal and interpretive stances to them (Zaunbrecher 2012: 523). This is why one can speak of an interpretive paradigm, which leaves the raw data intact.

This type of creationism stresses and exploits a dividing line between non-speculative, applied science (one might speak of technology), whose achievements are unquestionable and can be implemented; and speculative, more theoretical science, whose findings can only take the shape of theories and can never be totally proven. In the latter case, there is a hypothetical space which leaves room for alternate narratives, whatever the quality of their documentation. Harun Yahya’s creationism expresses a dogmatic belief in positive science, while taking a selective stance toward speculative science as it either recognizes the evident signs of God's

[19] It can be compared to Boyle’s conception, according to which the greatness of God can be empirically assessed since the invariant laws created by God can be discovered and studied by science (see Gould 1998).

design (and is therefore true: true science and true religion) or does not recognize them (and is therefore wrong: unscientific science, no religion or wrong religion) (see also Hildering et al. 2012). Any kind of evolutionism – be it biological, social or religious – belongs to this latter category of erroneous, misleading, lying, ideological pretense at science.

**References**


Abu el-Haj N (1998) Translating truths: Nationalism, the practice of archeology, and the remaking of past and present in contemporary Jerusalem. *American Ethnologist* 25(2): 166-188.

Adam JP (1975) *L'archéologie devant l'imposture* Paris: Robert Laffont.

al-Hassan AY and Hill D (1986) *Islamic Technology: An Illustrated History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barthes R (1968) L'Effet de réel. *Communications*. 11: 84-89.

Bucaille M (1976) *La Bible, le Coran et la Science : Les Écritures Saintes examinées à la lumière des connaissances modernes*. Brussels: Seghers.

Butterfield H (1959) *The Origins of Modern Science*, 1300-1800. London: Macmillan

Collins FS (2007) *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*. New York: Free Press.

Dallal A (2004) Quran and science. In: McAuliffe J (ed) *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*. Leiden: Brill.

Davis TW (2004) *Shifting Sands: The Rise and Fall of Biblical Archaeology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Diaz-Andreu M and Champion T (eds) (1996) *Nationalism and Archaelogy in Europe*: Louvain-la-Neuve: UCL Press.

Drury MO'C (1973) *The Danger of Words*. London: Routledge.

Dupret B (2002) Sexual Morality at the Egyptian Bar: Female Circumcision, Sex Change Operations, and Motives for Suing. *Islamic Law and Society*. 9(1): 41-69.

Dupret B (2011) *Practices of Truth: An Ethnomethodological Inquiry into Arab Contexts*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Dupret B et Gutron C (2016) Islamic Positivism and Scientific Truth: Qur'an and Archeology in a Creationist Documentary Film. *Human Studies*. 39(4): 621-643.

Edis T (2007) *An Illusion of Harmony: Science and Religion in Islam*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Edis T (1999) Cloning Creationism in Turkey. *Reports of the National Center for Science Education*. Berkeley, CA: National Center for Science Education 19(6): 30–35.

Enserink M (2007) In Europe's Mailbag: A Glossy Attack on Evolution. *Science* 315(5814) : 925.

Evans-Pritchard EE (1965) *Theories of Primitive Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fagan GG (2006) *Archeological Fantasies. How Pseudoarcheology Misrepresents the Past and Misleads the Public*. London: Routledge.

Fawcett C, Habu J, Mastunaga J (eds) (2008) *Evaluating multiple narratives: beyond nationalist, colonialist, imperialist archeologies* New York: Springer.

Feder K (1996) *Frauds, Myths and Mysteries: Science and Pseudosciences in Archeology*. Mountain View: Mayfield.

Ferngren GB (ed) (2002) *Science & Religion: A Historical Introduction*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Frazer JG (1894) *The Golden Bough*. New York: Macmillan.

Garfinkel H (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ghaly M (forthcoming) Biomedical Scientists as Co-muftis: Their Contribution to Contemporary Islamic Bioethics. *Die Welt des Islam*.

Golshani M (ed) (1998) *Can Science Dispense with Religion?* Teheran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies.

Golshani M (2003) Does science offer evidence of a transcendent reality and purpose? *Islam & Science* 1(1): 45-65.

Gonzalez P and Stavo-Debauge J (2015) "Dominez la terre !" Le créationnisme, du fondamentalisme à la désécularisation. *Archives des sciences sociales des religions* 169: 389-414.

Goodwin C (2002) Time in Action. *Current Anthropology* 43(S4): S19-S35.

Gosden C (2006) Race and racism in archeology: An introduction. *World Archeology* 38(1): 1-7.

Gould SJ (1985) *The Flamingo's Smile*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Gould SJ (1998) *Leonardo's Mountain of Clams and the Diet of Worms*. New York: Harmony Books.

Gould SJ (1999) *Rocks of Ages: Science and Religion in the fullness of life*. Ballantine Books.

Grant E (1996) *The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages: Their Religious, Institutional, and Intellectual Contexts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Graves-Brown P, Jones S, Gramble C (eds) (1996) *Cultural Identity and Archeology: The Construction of European Communities*. London: Routledge.

Gutron C (2011) *L'archéologie en Tunisie (xix$^{e}$-xx$^{e}$ siècles). Jeux généalogiques sur l'Antiquité*. Paris: Karthala.

Hacking I (1983) *Representing and Intervening*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harrison P (2010) *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heritage J and Greatbatch D (1986) Generating Applause: A Study of Rhetoric and Response at Party Political Conferences. *The American Journal of Sociology*. 92(1): 110-157.

Hildering P, Consoli L, van den Born R (2012) Denying Darwin: Views on science in the rejection of evolution by Dutch Protestants. *Public Understanding of Science* 22(8): 988-998.

IDEAC (Intelligent Design and Evolution Awareness Center) (2004). *Intelligent Design Theory in a Nutshell*. Seattle, WA.

Jayyusi L (1984) *Categorization and the Moral Order*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Jayyusi L (1991) The equivocal text and the objective world: An ethnomethodological analysis of a news report. *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture* 5(1): 166-90.

Kohl P, Kozelsk M, Ben-Yehuda N (2007) *Selective remembrances: archeology in the construction, commemoration, and consecration of national pasts*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Kuhn TS (1962) *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Latour B and Lemonnier P (1994) Introduction: Genèse sociale des techniques, genèse technique des humains. In Latour B. and Lemonnier P. (eds.) *De la préhistoire aux missiles balistiques. L'intelligence sociale des techniques*. Paris: La Découverte.

Leaman O (1998) *Averroes and his philosophy*. London: Routledge.

Le Quellec JL (2009) *Des Martiens au Sahara. Chroniques d'archéologie romantique*. Arles: Actes Sud.

Le Quellec JL (2011) L'archéologie romantique, une pseudo-archéologie. Entretien avec Jean-Loïc Le Quellec. *SPS* 294 (January). Available at: http://www.pseudo-sciences.org/spip.php?article1600

Livingston E (1995) *An Anthropology of Reading*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Lynch M (1998) The Discursive Production of Uncertainty: The OJ Simpson 'Dream Team' and the Sociology of Knowledge Machine. *Social Studies of Science*. 28(5/6): 829-868.

Lynch M and Bogen D (1996) *The Spectacle of History: Speach, Text, and Memory at the Iran-contra Hearings*. Durham: Duke University Press.

MacEachern S (2006) Africanist archeology and ancient IQ: Racial science and cultural evolution in the twenty-first century. *World Archeology* 38(1): 72-92.

Malcom N (1993) *Wittgenstein: A Religious Point of View?* (edited with a response by Peter Winch). London: Routledge.

Malcom N (2014) *Wittgenstein. Un point de vue religieux? Suivi d'une réponse de Peter Winch* (traduit de l'anglais et postfacé par Michel Le Du). Paris: Editions de l'Eclat.

Mardin Ş (1989) *Religion and social change in Modern Turkey. The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Masci D (2011). Religious Belief and Attitudes about Science in the United States. In Keeter S, Smith G (eds) *The Culture of Science: How the Public Relates to Science Across the Globe*. New York: Routledge.

Meskell L (ed) (1998) *Archeology under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*. London: Routledge.

Numbers L (2006) *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Numbers RL (ed) (2009) *Galileo Goes To Jail and Other Myths About Science and Religion*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Plantinga A (2007) Science and Religion. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at: http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/religion-science/.

Plavcan JM (2007) The Invisible Bible: The Logic of Creation Science. In Petto AJ, Godfrey LR (eds) *Scientists Confront Creationism*. New York, London: Norton.

Pope John Paul II (1981) Cosmology and Fundamental Physics. *Address to the Pontifical Academy of Science* 3 October.

Ratzsch D and Koperski J (2010) Teleological Arguments for God's Existence. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at: http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/teleological-arguments/.

Sharratt M (1994) *Galileo: Decisive Innovator*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sharrock W (1974) On Owning Knowledge. In Turner R (ed) *Ethnomethodology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd.

Sharrock W and Read R (2003) *Kuhn: Philosopher of Scientific Revolution*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Silberman NA (1993) *A Prophet from amongst you: The Life of Yigael Yadin, Soldier, Scholar, and Mythmaker of Modern Israel*. Addison-Wesley.

Silberman NA (2008) La Bible, l'archéologie et la formation des identités modernes, In Demoule JP and Stiegler B (eds) *L'avenir du passé. Modernité de l'archéologie* Paris: La Découverte.

Solberg AR (2013) *The Mahdi Wears Armani: An Analysis of the Harun Yahya Enterprise* Södertörn University.

Stace WT (1952) *Time and Eternity: an Essay in the Philosophy of Religion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Stoczkowski W (1999) *Des hommes, des dieux et des extraterrestres. Ethnologie d'une croyance moderne*. Paris: Flammarion.

Stoczkowski W (2000) *Anthropologie naïve, Anthropologie savante: De l'origine de l'Homme, de l'imagination et des idées reçues*. Paris: CNRS Editions.

Testart A (2012) *Avant l'histoire. L'évolution des sociétés, de Lascaux à Carnac*. Paris: Gallimard.

Veyne P (1988) *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Winch P (2007) *The Idea of a Social Science and Its Relation to Philosophy*. London: Routledge.

Wittgenstein L (2000) *Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough*. Humanities Press.

Yahya H *Atlas of* Creation. Istanbul: Global Yayıncılık.

Yüksel E (2005) Harun Yahya or Adnan Oktar: the Promised Mahdi? 21 February. Available at: web.archive.org

Zaunbrecher NJ (2012) Suspending Belief and Suspending Doubt: The Everyday and the Virtual in Practices of Factuality. *Human Studies*. 35(4): 519-537.