

Anthropocentrism and Divine Objectivity. Some Observations on the Logic Behind the “Scientific Miracle of the Qur’an”¹

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The “scientific miracle of the Qur’an” acquired its present-day form and gained momentum after Maurice Bucaille’s success in 1976, when authors like the Yemenite Zindani or Khalifa set out for ambitious goals such as the scientific demonstration of Qur’anic “miracles.”² In the context of the Seventh Saudi Medical Conference (1982) Zindani set up a committee to investigate the scientific signs in the Qur’an and the Hadith. Since then world congresses and local ones have been frequent, including the publication of books and materials that new information technology decisively helped to spread.

The “scientific miracle” is a trend of popular culture that is shaped and nourished by the new media and by new dynamics in the creation of Muslim authoritativeness involving Muslim scientists and institutions at university level. For instance, in Tétouan (Morocco), an association affiliated with the organization of congresses on the scientific miracles of the Qur’an organizes, in the faculty of sciences, conferences in which the scientific character of the Qur’an is discussed.³

In the words of an interviewee, professor of science, and organizer of the local conference in Tétouan: “We [the human beings] are mathematics.”⁴ In the course of the interview he sketched plenty of graphs in order to demonstrate his point: for instance, a comparative scheme in which the universe, the Milky Way, the atom, the cell, and the Muslims revolve around the Ka’aba, sharing the same traits, the same maths, and the same design with an axis of rotation that he represented as anti-clock wise in the direction followed by the pilgrims in their circumambulation. According to him, all physical phenomena share the same structure and that means that there can have only been one Creator.

During the interview I could also detect the usual criticism of Darwinism employed by most of the authors who produce this kind of literature, characterized by a remarkable pedagogical effort at synthesizing and popularizing, with the same argumentations repeated over and over again in self-produced booklets and brochures provided with illustrations and frequent caricatures of Darwin with an ape’s body. However, some aspects emerged in the interview that are not always easy to identify in the materials and written documents examined: for example, the idea that the world has been designed by God for the humans. There emerges in this discourse, in my opinion, an unsuspected anthropocentrism although formulated in terms of “divine objectivity.”

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² Zindani 1980; Khalifa 1980.

³ “3rd Conference on the Scientific Miracles of the Qur’an and the Sunna,” Faculty of Sciences, University Abdelmalek Essaadi, Tétouan, September 17-19 2010 (the first conference took place in 2005).

⁴ Interview in Tétouan, April 19 2013.

Humanity is a goal created by God, and the whole universe tends to, or is ordered for it. My interviewee used the example of how the earth is protected: How can one explain that the solar rays that approach our planet change their temperature from 500 to 14°C when they enter in contact with the atmosphere? It is a physical process that protects human life and hence renders it possible. He defined such processes “the preparation of the earth for the humans.” All this, in his opinion, cannot have been invented by a human being. The Prophet communicated the truth of the cosmos, its maths, as well as absolute truth. However it is not a matter of faith, but a “scientific truth” as my interviewee expressed it. *I’jāz ‘ilmī* (a “scientific miracle”) is proof that the Qur’an anticipated modern science in indicating the facts of the cosmos and the explanation of natural phenomena.⁵

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⁵ Naggar 2007, 72.