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Anatomy of the eye according to the 9th century scholar Hunayn ibn Ishaq
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tion of how accurate the historical narratives are. There's been a lot of rethinking of that in the last several decades, in particular. Since the 1960s but especially the 1980s and into the 1990s, we're getting greater challenges to that dominant Western narrative, but it still prevails. That Western narrative has been prevalent for so long and has been spread so far and so wide. It's so deeply entrenched in the psyche of so many peoples around the world that it's really taking a great deal of time to try to challenge it and to revise it, even though we're working on revising it. I will just end my thoughts by referring to Tamim Ansary's 2009 book 'A History of the World through Islamic Eyes', where he challenges these kinds of narratives, as many other people do. Ansary talks about different reasons why the Middle Eastern, Chinese, Indian, and East Asian civilizations — he doesn't deal as much with Africa — went in the way that they did, and it's not a decline para-

digm; It's interpreted according to their own internal needs and conditions and the context in which they were. When you interpret history according to the context of each society, it comes out differently. It will be very vague, broad, and simplistic unless we go into deeper details. That's a broad summary of it. You gave a general idea of what is the alternative way of interpreting history that you are proposing. I'm sure our readers can follow up on the matter since you gave the references. I'll just add that, for instance, if you interpret the concept of a renaissance in a strictly European way, it yields a particular expected outcome, which is again, Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment, etc. But it's a European Renaissance. If the idea of Renaissance is a kind of revival of culture, science, technology, and these kinds of things and you interpret that idea of revival within

the context of particular societies and civilizations, then it yields different outcomes as in what it means to those people. You can interpret, for instance, the Industrial Revolution as more of an unexpected lucky chance. Necessity was the mother of invention. It involved some randomness. It involved some random unexpected discoveries that were stumbled upon. They weren't as if it was all the just sheer brilliance of these people sitting around, thinking all of this through, conceptualizing, and coming up. It was the needs of the moment. The increase in coal production in Britain, the lack of wood, the need for a new fuel source, and things like that drove the desperate search. At the right moment and in the right time, these pieces came together in Britain, in particular at this time. But they were also drawing off of previous scholarships. But you didn't have this same set of historical circumstances in China or the Middle East that would require that kind of production and development of

that technology. It wasn't there. They didn't have a need for it. They didn't have a need for free market capitalism and these kinds of things. So, all of this was needed in western society, much of which was random, too. The last thing I'll say is the violence in relation to the military conquest and military technology — that facilitated the rise of the West and the dominance of other societies — is a major issue. The exploitation of those other societies and their resources are very harsh realities that expedited the rise of the West in other ways than the idea of a brilliant, advanced culture and civilization that has progressed ahead of everybody else because of its superior ways. That narrative is challenged by all of these other ideas that then force us to reinterpret the histories of the other people and how we understand their decline and their ability to advance and to develop in their own trajectories within their own context.

TO BE CONTINUED

About the book:

Reason, Revelation and Law in Islamic and Western Theory and History

This book engages the diverse meanings and interpretations of Islamic and Western law which have affected people and societies across the globe, past and present, in correlation to the epistemological groundings of those meanings and interpretations. The volume takes a distinctively comparative approach, advancing dialogue on crucial transnational and global debates over the history of Western and Islamic approaches to law, politics and society and their relevance for today. It discusses how fundamental concepts are understood and even translated from one historical or political context or one semantic domain to another. The book provides focused studies of key figures and theories in a manageable, accessible format useful for specialized academic courses and research as well as general audiences.

