Conclusions

As we reach the end of our short journey, the reader will have noted that the ethical values underlying the Islamic path are, in essence, already shared or entirely shareable by those belonging to different religious traditions, allowing for a degree of nuance or some different shades of meaning due to inevitable cultural singularities: such as patience, which is more like constancy, in purpose and action; or gratitude, something concrete linked to increase; or mercy, the will to good that connects to a mother's love; or peace, which is first of all soundness and salvation; or repentance, which is not about punishment but about turning back and forgiveness. From gratitude to generosity and the goodness of giving, caring for the poor and the weak, caring for our planet, leafing through Islam's Holy Book, the Qur'ān and the Prophet's Tradition, or Sunna, with the subsequent elaborations of theologians and jurists, medieval and contemporary, one finds the same ideals that are recognised by other traditions; values that, although dependent on a different theoretical system based on an imposed heteronomy of ethics, would nonetheless appear to be reconcilable with a secularised or simply humanist world view. Pondering with an open mind the moral principles on which Islam rests is very important in our troubled times, because to build peaceful coexistence in today's world what we need is not so much compatible contingent rules and guidelines as a compatibility of the values underlying those rules, which can then further underpin generally accepted behavioural norms. Precisely in the light of our awareness of the impossibility of moral norms ever completely coinciding with the rule of law, or of good intentions with actual behaviour, or of ethical premises with the realities of history, morality – an inescapable part of the Islamic religion, as of others – is a foundation that we can all build on.