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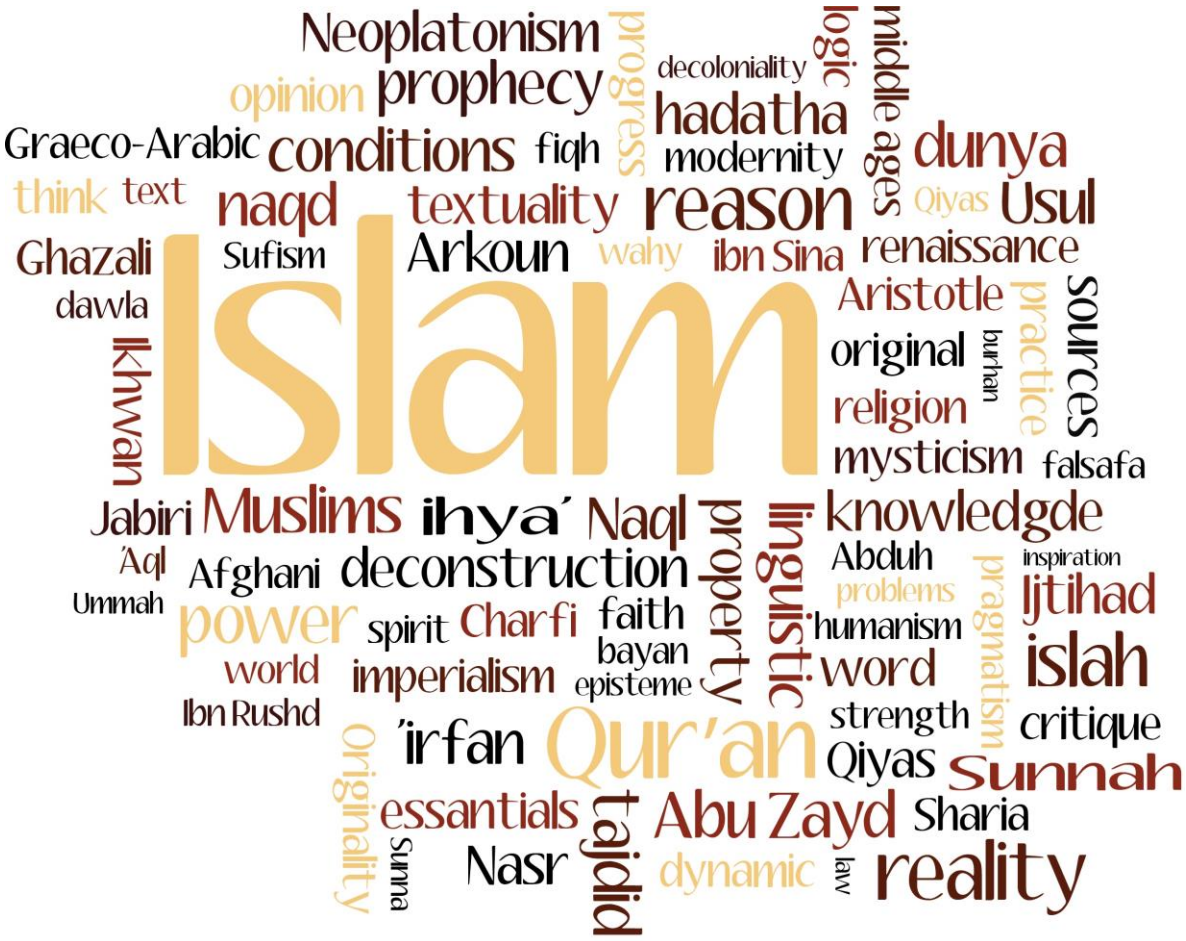

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Contemporary Arab-Islamic thought: between reform, renewal and critique

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EDITORS' PREFACE

Saer El-Jaichi

The contributions presented in this issue deal with a range of debates and questions in contemporary Arab-Islamic thought, focusing especially on the ideas, and key methodological approaches, of prominent twentieth-century Arabic-speaking thinkers who attempt in various ways, and from various intellectual positions, to revive (*iḥyāʾ*) and renew (*taǧdīd*) the tradition of Islām against the backdrop of modern thought. Historically speaking, the endeavour toward reviving the cultural and religious legacy of Islām within the context of modernity began in the early nineteenth century in direct response to European invasions of the Muslim lands, starting with the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798. Indeed, in many ways, contemporary Arab-Islamic thought emerged in response to the shock of Western modernity – that is, the unexpected shock that left Muslims with a feeling of inferiority and backwardness vis-à-vis the Christian West due to the latter's economic, political and technological advances, and military superiority. In the face of this somehow traumatic event, one question, which would be repeated countless times in ideological writings, historical studies, and even fictional works, became especially urgent: "Why did the Renaissance, which fostered the Age of Enlightenment, emerge out of Western thought, not Arab-Islamic thought?" Thus, when Muslim thinkers began to understand why modernity has arisen in the West, they were conscious of the close correlation between the development of European intellectual culture and its culmination in the (re)birth of the Renaissance culture in all its multifarious aspects.

To be sure, to explain the factors that stimulated the emergence of Western modernity one needs to account for the historical origins of the Renaissance. In other words, to reflect upon Western modernity is essentially to reflect upon the historical origins of the Renaissance. But what precisely does the term "Renaissance" mean, and what does it tell us about the transition from pre-modern to modern Europe? Put in very simple terms, what is now called the Renaissance, that is, the "age of transition to the modern world", signifies socio-political, economic, and cultural processes, made possible in the 14th and 15th centuries first and foremost thanks to the dissolution of the feudal mode of production and its replacement with new conditions that led to the capitalist mode of production. These processes in turn made possible the rupture with the medieval past, thus providing "some of the foundations for the later Scientific and Industrial Revolutions" – including the rise of Protestantism, a renewal of interest in classical learning, and the invention of the printing press" (J. J. Martin, 2003:

30; A. Lucas, 2010: 987). Thus what is now called "Renaissance" is, culturally speaking, a transformation accomplished through a process, "which was marked particularly by a revival of the influence of classical antiquity" (G. Griffiths 1988: 92). Put in a nutshell, changes in material circumstances culminated in the 15th century in a whole new mode of thinking, which made its first significant impact with the revival of interest in the legacy of Greek rationality.

If we now look to the Arab-Islamic context, we almost inevitably end up turning our attention to the widely used Arabic equivalent term for 'renaissance', *nahḍa*, which designates two separate kinds of revivals: first, the revival in medieval times known as the "Graeco-Arabic Renaissance", which marks the rebirth of the Greek legacy in the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries of Islām (Kraemer 1992: 135; also F. Rosenthal 1975: 1-14; D. Gutas 2012: 1-11); and secondly, the above-mentioned revival attempts in the modern era, initiated in response to Napoleon's invasion in 1798.

The Graeco-Arabic *nahḍa* in medieval times: why did it fail?

The Renaissance in medieval Islām took place during the reign of the ʿAbbāsid's beginning in the 3rd/9th century until about the 7th/13th century. The extraordinary success of this Renaissance, which we know today as the "Graeco-Arabic *nahḍa*," had its roots in material conditions that gave rise to power and economic wealth, which in turn stimulated the intellectual and social dynamism of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate. Indeed, both power and economic wealth were crucial to the making of the Arab-Islamic culture and its leading place in the medieval world. Already during the early centuries of its reign, the ʿAbbāsid caliphate expanded its rule to the Eastern Mediterranean region, North Africa and large areas of central Asia. As a result, most of "Byzantium's eastern trade" came under Islamic control (A. Dal, 2010: 28; H. C. Evans 2012: 4-11). The growth of trade in these newly conquered territories – which also resulted in ʿAbbāsid control of seaports and sea routes in the Mediterranean, Black Sea, as well as the Indian Ocean - led not only to economic growth and centralisation of administration but, as we now know, also to a process of cross-cultural fertilization. More precisely, the basic precondition for cultural prosperity in the ʿAbbāsid era was the prosperity in the ʿAbbāsid economy. This prosperity was a major factor behind the new *Weltanschauung* under which the new elite could unify despite its ethnic, cultural, and religious diversities. This trajectory of increasing complexity at the economic and the cultural levels in the cosmopolitan capital of Baġdād, beginning especially with the reigns of al-Manṣūr (714 AD – 775 AD) and Harūn ar-Rašīd (786 AD – 809 AD), fostered new forms of scholarly inquiry in response to certain epistemic demands that had not existed in the past, that is, before the

phase of the caliphate's dynamic transformation and the rise of the intellectual climate in which this transformation took shape (from the 8th and 9th centuries AD onwards). The Graeco-Arabic renaissance, which embraced "the translation movement of ancient science and philosophy from Greek into Arabic," saw daylight precisely in the context of this climate.[1]

Among other things - for example, the manifold contacts of the Arabs and Muslims with large parts of North Africa, West Asia and al-Andalus, as well as the previous cultures of the Mediterranean basin, including the Near Eastern Hellenistic culture - this renaissance gave expression to a tradition of science and philosophy, comprising among many others, thinkers such as Kindī, Farābī, Ibn Sīnā, at-Tawḥīdī, Ibn Miskawayh, Ibn Māğa and Ibn Rušd. Notwithstanding their differences, these thinkers shared a common oeuvre that can be defined in terms of three features: "(1) adoption of the ancient philosophic classics as an educational and cultural ideal in the formation of mind and character; (2) a conception of the common kinship and unity of mankind; and (3) humanness, or love of mankind" (cf. Kraemer 1992: 10). In addition to this tradition and, of course, the earlier religious traditions of exegesis (*tafsīr*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and *ḥadīṯ*, two other traditions developed, more or less in the same period: (1) the theological tradition, known as *ʿilm al-kalām*, whose development into a systematic discipline based on rational arguments is intimately connected with the school of the Muʿtazila; (2) the mystical tradition known as *tasawwuf* (or *ʿirfān*, i.e., gnosis) that favors spiritual experience rather than rational/discursive knowledge.[2]

Without dwelling further upon the historical aspects of this picture, or entering into any further details about its multifarious implications, in relation to Islām's wider development as a belief system (*ʿaqīda*), we cannot refrain from asking the question of how and why the Graeco-Arabic renaissance in medieval Islamic culture deviated from its historic progressive path.

To answer this question, several modern scholars have pointed to a number of political and ideological factors, including among other things:[3]

1. The disintegration of ʿAbbāsid authority in ʿIrāq, in the early tenth century, and the declining hegemony of the ruling caliphal elite in power and decision-making centers at different levels,

[1] For more on the political, social, and ideological factors behind the Graeco-Arabic translation movement, see cf. Gutas (2012), esp. part 2.2.-3, 4.1-2.

[2] Of course, this division between the different traditions should not be understood in this strict sense of absolute separation. In the context of Islamic culture, the various Islamic traditions of knowledge emerged and existed in interdependency with each other.

[3] I make no claims whatsoever that the factors mentioned here constitute an exhaustive list.

mainly as a result of civil wars, as well as territorial losses and the loss of political and economic sovereignty – which was always dependent on the security of Baġdād and other urban centers such as Kūfa, Baṣra, and Samarrā' and the security of their frontiers. These developments, and many of these geopolitical fragmentations, which (as Šawqī Ḍayf shows[4]) ultimately led to the creation of mono-confessional enclaves and minor - relatively independent - dynasties, in the place of the poly-ethnic, central authority in Baġdād - was greatly aided by the influx of the "semi-nomadic" Selğuk Turks into the upper levels of the caliphal administration[5]. The Selğuks, who had been hired during the reign of al-Muʿṭasim (r. 833-844) to form a professional army for his "retaliatory expedition against Byzantium,"[6] were very often individuals with a military background. This was in sharp contrast to the former administrative machinery of the ʿAbbāsid government, which was run by employees with administrative skills. In contrast to this latter administrative class, which somehow formed a hybrid of Graeco-Arabic and Persian culture, the rising Selğuks succeeded gradually in dominating the army and in taking charge of the political authority in Baġdād, but showed - with just a few exceptions[7] - no serious interest in secular culture and learning[8]; instead - it is argued - they turned to the institutionalization of orthodox Sunnī jurisprudence and theology. From this point of view, due to this Selğuk influx, the official patronage of secular - and especially Greek - learning and culture of the early ʿAbbāsids, "which favored more rationalist schools of thought," was replaced by what is commonly called "the Sunni revival of the eleventh century."[9] Along with this development, which flourished at the expense of the intellectual diversity that had prevailed earlier, scholars also point to the exclusion of rationality in the field of theology due to the "permanent withdrawal of caliphal support for the Muʿtazila in the aftermath of the so-called inquisition (*miḥna*) instituted first by Caliph al-Mutawakkil and then by al-Qādir."[10] Ever since, Islamic legal and political thinking became less open to accepting the rational study of the Qurʾān, as the exegete (*mufassir*) remained within the descriptive task of, say,

[4] Šawqī Ḍayf (1973), 9-27.
[5] G. Ágoston, B. Masters (2009), xxv-xxxvi.
[6] J. S. Codoñer (2014), 279.
[7] For two of these few exceptions see S. F. Starr (2013), 395.
[8] However, this view seems to be contestable; see e.g., cf. S. F. Starr (2013), 394-406.
[9] G. Makdisi, (1973), 155-68; J. Berkey (2003), 189-202; D. Ephrat (2000), 1-6.
[10] R. C. Martin, et. al. (1997), 35. See also J. Van Ess (1997), 446-508.

explaining the meaning of the Qurʾānic passages in accordance with "the views of the companions [of the Prophet], and the opinions of the ʿulamāʾ (*aqwāl ʿulamāʾ al-salaf*).[11] This resulted in a mode of thinking, known as traditionalism, which has prevented Islamic thought from renewing itself, thus laying fertile ground for the age of decay (*inḥiṭāṭ*), largely by undermining the continuity and development of "the heritage of Hellenized Islam." [12] Furthermore, this traditionalism marginalized the discourses of the demonstrative and natural sciences, while at the same time not recognizing the priority of axiomatic rules (*al-istidlāl al-burhānī*) in theological and scientific matters. This, in fact, explains - at least, according to this perspective – why traditionalism continues to inform the patterns of thinking in post-colonial Muslim societies, including the cultural patterns that sustain both the patterns of teaching and learning within the educational institutions. Moreover, this approach asserts that the growth of Islamism in the early twentieth century is the result of the continued dominance of this tradition as it has instrumentalized its enormous moral authority to equate the entire enterprise of the *nahḍa* with religious reform (*iṣlāh*) on the basis of a fundamentalist vision of reality. This vision, which is rooted in the anti-rationalist and anti-philosophical Sunnī orthodox tradition, gradually became the central ideological frame of reference against which all kinds of knowledge must be legitimized.

2. The so-called "closure of the gate" of *iǧtihād* and the prevalence of *taqlīd*, that is, "imitation, or adherence to the teachings of the classical jurists."[13] Due to this enclosure, which resulted in the formation of a fixed frame of reference within the field of the religious sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-šarʿiyya*), traditional ways of learning gained widespread legitimacy, both within and outside the religious education system. This, in turn, hampered the development of Arab-Islamic thought on a rational basis because of its almost exclusive reliance on transmitted tradition (*naql*) and consensus (*iǧmāʿ*) rather than reason (*ʿaql*) and deductive inference (*burhān*). This whole tendency culminated towards the end of the 11th century with Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī (1058–1111) whose teachings became the guiding principles of the emerging Selǧuk regime, which rejected all ideas and beliefs that deviated from certain core creeds of "orthodox Sunnī Islām" as idolatrous human inventions (*bidaʿ*). Indeed, Ġazālī's writings - we are told - were to play a profound role in future Sunnī thinking in two

[11] M. Q. Zaman (2012), 97.
[12] B. Tibi (2009), 255.
[13] F. E. Peters (2003), 117-118.

substantial ways: (i) he discouraged Muslim scholars from addressing substantive philosophical and scientific questions, or at least new points of view on the relation between faith and reason (*al-naql wa-l ʿaql*), between faith and free will (*irāda*) and (ii) led them to focus instead on methods for integrating practical morality, piety and spirituality properly into the frame of religious disciplines, first and foremost the legal aspects of Islamic law (*ʿulūm aš-Šarīʿa*) – as summarized in his: *Revivification of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm ad-dīn*) and *The Alchemy of Happiness* (*Kimiya-yi saʾadat*). This tendency of Ġazālī's work - which can be characterized as a theological pursuit of a "Just Balance (*Qisṭās Mustaqīm*)" that he envisioned as a return to the Qurʾān and the prophetical ḥadīṯ in accordance with *The Standard of Knowledge in Logics* (*Miʿyār al-ʿilm fī fann al-manṭiq*) – led Arab-Islamic thought towards a trajectory of de-Hellenization, and thus ultimately, de-rationalization. This development has played an important role in enabling the appearance of an Arab-Islamic mode of thinking, which "sought knowledge through gnostic illumination (*ʿirfān*)" due mainly to ancient oriental, Neoplatonic, and Manichean mystical influences.[14] With this regression towards irrationalism, which at least in Ġazālī's version meant the definitive refutation of Aristotelian metaphysics and natural sciences, Arab-Islamic thought has limited itself to justifying "the epistemological authority of the Qurʾān and *sunna*" (cf. Griffel 2009: 116), including such issues as the juridical context in which analogy (*qiyās*) can be applied, as well as doctrinal purity, that is, the definition of the "right belief or purity of faith [...] in accordance with the teaching and direction of an absolute extrinsic authority,"[15] all of which had culminated in the withstanding of "the intruding rational sciences" (*al-ʿulūm al-ʿaqliyya al-daḫīla*).[16] The central role that the traditionalist *ʿulamāʾ* played in shaping the mainstream Muslim imaginary, and the public discourse in general, both in the social and cultural realms, as well as the realms of learning institutions following the independence of many Arab states in the aftermath of World War II, reinforced the authority of this tradition, which in turn

[14] A. Tayob (2004), 115. This is the thesis famously advanced by M. ʿA. al-Ğābirī in his magnum opus *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* ("Critique of the Arab Reason"), which comprises, among others, two volumes: *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*: *Takwin al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* (1982); and *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* (1986). Others find such a thesis simply untenable as an interpretation of Ġazālī's enterprise, for example, F. Griffel (2009).

[15] Charles, J. Callan (1913), 330.

[16] Historians of Arabic science have devoted extensive studies to this problem of the decline of Graeco-Arabic science and philosophy after Ġazālī.

> reinforced the *ʿulamāʾs* "monopoly of definition and interpretation with regard to the sacred texts."[17]

The culture shock of Western modernity in the Arab-Islamic world: very brief overview

According to some scholars, the declining trend or the symptoms of intellectual stagnation in Islām continued, with varying degrees of intensity, until about the rise of the Ottoman sultanate, when Islamic culture started flourishing again due to a brief but powerful revival of interest in science, as the result of enhanced intellectual innovation and creativity during the centuries that followed the Turkish capture of Constantinople in 1453. According to others, the decline of Islamic culture continued even right up to the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in the late eighteenth century. Notwithstanding the accuracy of such opinions, and the positions in between them, the remaining section will pick up the thread at the point where we left off earlier, and develop another line of argument regarding the culture shock-experience of Arab-Islamic thought due to its encounter with the West. This will set the scene for the papers presented in this special issue.

In this account of the birth of the *nahḍa* - which is accepted by most scholars in the field - it is, roughly speaking, legitimate to say that the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt marks the decisive turning point towards the period of 'awakening' from centuries of intellectual slumber in the Arab Muslim world. The invasion was - one can argue, and it is indeed often argued - an unpleasant surprise for the Arabs at many different levels. Due to this invasion, which set the stage for the modern colonial encounter in the Middle East, Arab societies found themselves face to face with an advanced industrial power, combining in itself science-based technology, as well as economic, legal and bureaucratic rationality. Many, if not most, of these societies were still in the ruinous state in which the Ottomans had left them. That is, still agricultural, non-industrialized and quasi-feudal. Yet, at the same time, the Arabs' recognition of the new reality, that is, their realization of each and every aspect that formed part of the West's superiority was something that threatened the Arab Muslim world's collective self-image and self-esteem, both of which were so inextricably bound up with being 'the birthplace of civilization' (*mahd al-ḥaḍāra*).

The Arab Muslim world came to realize how very far it still had to go in order to rehabilitate this civilizational status - a fact that becomes apparent when looking at the writings of the "reformist" intellectuals of that period and its remnants within current debates. In

[17] Ursula Günther (2006), 142.

the course of its pre-modern history, that is, when Turkish conquerors established their rule within the "whole of the Arabic-speaking world (including Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Irāq, and Transjordan)," [18] Arabic thought had already undergone a temporary setback during the Ottoman era - which also to some extent had eroded its cultural sovereignty and gradually pushed the older rationality of medieval Arabic science into retreat. In other words, in this perspective, the series of devastating setbacks that the Arab Muslim world suffered in the aftermath of European colonial domination was nothing but the culminating point of tendencies that had begun decades before, starting in the Ottoman era and later accentuated with European "encroachment" on the Arab provinces within the Ottoman sultanate.[19]

After decades of Ottoman domination, and endless struggles to establish and defend a distinct Pan-Arab identity, the Arab Muslim world was now facing perhaps its greatest challenge: i.e., the colonial challenge of Western modernity. The Western and, to a lesser extent, Ottoman colonial presence, which are viewed by many scholars as keys to "the first glimmers of what could be called a national consciousness"[20] in the Arab Muslim world, provided fertile ground for self-critical and self-interrogating currents of thought (*naqd ḏātī*). In spite of their internal differences, these currents had two common features: on the one hand, the striving "for authenticity with regard to Arab cultural identity" in view of the challenges coming from the new colonial threat; and, on the other hand, the endeavour to locate - and provide solutions tailored specifically to - the structural problems behind the Arab world's cultural, social and technological stagnation.[21]

In a sense, therefore, the *nahḍa* project in the mid-nineteenth century was also the beginning of an emerging national consciousness within the context of both anti-Ottoman and anti-colonialist struggles for liberation and independence. Somehow, paradoxically, though emerging from a rejection of "Western cultural imperialism", the diverse currents of thought, which began to grow and flourish in the age of *nahḍa*, due in major part to this national consciousness, "aimed at achieving their goal through the selective adoption of Western modernity" (cf. Hassan 2001).[22] The proponents of these currents of

[18] L. Steet (2000), 32.
[19] S. Eddin Ibrahim (2006), 3.
[20] J. Shalan (2006), 129. Such a perspective might help one to better understand nationalism's instant and widespread appeal amongst the intellectual elite and its middle-class allies across the Arab world who felt increasingly threatened first by the Ottomans, and then by European colonialism. This explains, at least to some extent, why in that period renewal and reform became pan-national priorities for all Arab intellectuals.
[21] W. S. Hassan, (2001), 40.
[22] It is in this sense that one may understand Ḥassan Ḥanafī's remark that Arab thought consists of three different aspects: "(1) classical Islamic

thought were intellectuals, who, in different ways, sought to reconsider the problem of past and present (*al-māḍī*/*al-ḥāḍir*), of authenticity and contemporaneity (*aṣāla*/*muʿāṣara*), of heritage and renewal (*turāṯ-tağdīd*), in the hope of uncovering true potentialities of enlightenment (*tanwīr*) and creativity (*ibdāʾ*), as well as progress (*taqaddum*) and modernity (*al-ḥadāṯa*), especially in matters of national independence (*taḥarrur waṭanī*), liberty, equality and democracy. Even "women's emancipation" became a major issue of debate (*Taḥrīr al-marʾa*: Qāsim Amin, 1865- 1908). Among many other things, these thinkers also addressed issues regarding the "characteristics of despotism" (*ṭabāʾiʿ al-istibdād*: al-Kawākibī, 1888-1966); the revitalization of Islamic *šarīʿa* as a frame of reference for "Science, Civilization, and Technology" (*al-Islām Dīn al-ʿIlm wʾl-Madaniyya*: M. ʿAbduh, 1849-1905); the historicity of "Pre-Islamic Poetry" (*al-šiʿr al-ğāhilī*: Ṭāha Ḥussein, 1889-1973); the compatibility of Islām and secular governing, e.g., *al-Islām wa Uṣul al-Ḥukm* by ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Rāziq (1888-1966); while others, like Rifāʿa at-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801-73) and Ǧ. al-Dīn al-Afġānī, wrote about the marvels of the "Culture of Parisian Society" and the dangers of "agnostic naturalism" (*Ar-rad ʿalā ad- Dahriyyīn*).

Indeed, the early intellectual proponents of the modern Arab *nahḍa* were very often employing different - sometimes even conflicting - approaches and methodologies in their writings, and they were doing so for different purposes, and from different ideological standpoints, reflecting a tension between two different positions and, accordingly, two different understandings of the reasons and the cures for the stagnation into which Arab-Islamic societies had declined. In spite of this, however, they were at least implicitly engaged in the same task and responding substantially to the same "social and economic pressures" [23]; pressures, which in turn resulted in feelings of alienation, and the "feeling of disjuncture", that further undermined confidence in the value, utility and assumed superiority of the Arab-Islamic heritage as a "fundamental framework of reference" (*iṭār marğaʿī*).[24] Overcoming this alienation, which had befallen the Arab-Islamic world because of its failure to meet the new demands of cultural progress and modernity, became the common task of the pan-Arab national consciousness. In the minds of some of these intellectuals, the only recourse the Arab Muslim world had for overcoming this alienation was:

1. the appropriation of modernity, both in its material and institutional dimensions, as well as the secular epistemology of the human and social sciences; this, however, not in the sense of

heritage; (2) modern Western heritage; and (3) the present realities of the Arab world;" cited in Abū-Rabīʿ (2004), 64; also 97-98, and 129.

[23] D. Crecelius (1972), 191.

[24] Michaelle Browers (2006), 73.

mere 'westernization' (*taġrīb*), but in the sense of embracing the interpretative methodologies of modern human science within the broader aim of "reviving the heritage of Islamic rationalism" by critically rethinking the cultural and historical, as well as epistemological and ideological contexts in which they arose as an "underpinning for embracing modernity".[25]

In the minds of other intellectuals, however, the only recourse the Arab Muslim world had for overcoming this alienation was:

2. to reform (*iṣlāḥ*) the tradition by means of *iğtihād*, in order to re-interpret the classical legal, doctrinal and theological issues "on the basis of a return to the *ṣalaf al-ṣāliḥ* (the pious ancestors)" and by defining the *Šarīʿa's* main objectives in accordance with the overall public interest of the Muslim *Umma* (*maslaḥa*) in the face of - what these thinkers consider to be – 'un-Islamic' cultural influences .[26]

To put it another way, in the first of these two strands, the overcoming of alienation and attainment of political modernization, cultural revival, and socio-economic wealth, is possible only with the wholehearted embrace of the ready-made Western vision of modernity insofar as this entails the renewal (*tağdīd*) of Arabic rationality. From the point of view of the second strand, the overcoming of the state of nature is possible only through a return to the *Uṣūl*, that is, the fundamentals of Islām as founded by the authoritative sources the Qurʾān and the Sunna. On the basis of these sources, the classical traditions of ʿ*ilm al-kalām*, *tafsīr*, and *fiqh*, a reconciliation of faith and reason (*al-naql wa-l ʿaql*), of authenticity and contemporaneity (*aṣāla*/*muʿāṣara*) can be achieved as a solid foundation for the ideal society and state.

The papers in this issue engage with some methodological and thematic debates and questions that, in different ways, encompass insights from these two strands of thought, which have come more or less to dominate Arab-Islamic thought since the Arab *nahḍa* in the late nineteenth century.

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[25] Cf. B. Tibi (2012), 67, 74. Qāsim Amīn, Tawfīk al-Ḥakīm (1898-1987), Luṭfī as-Sayyid (1872– 1963), Ṭāha Hussein, and many others - mainly academics, intellectuals, and thinkers who "reflected the European orientation of Egyptian nationalism" represent the most sustained effort in this direction; J. Esposito (1998), 70.

[26] The proponents of this strand of thought belonged to the same generation, which included traditional intellectuals such as Ṭahṭāwī, Afġānī, and Muḥammad ʿAbduh; culturally speaking, these thinkers had an important impact by contributing to the nationalist and anti-colonialist orientation of the early reformist movement; see A. Belkeziz, (2009), ix-3, 40, and 27-47 (quote page 6); cf. Abū-Rabīʿ (2004), 206.

Safet Bektovic, in "Tradition and Modernity in contemporary Islamic Philosophy", offers a number of interpretations of what 'reform' (*iṣlāḥ*) means from the point of view of four contemporary Muslim intellectuals, with careful attention to their peculiar conceptions of "the role of philosophy in the interpretation of Islām", aiming to understand their differing methodological stances, along with the explanatory models they apply to diagnose, examine, and analyze the obstacles of Arab-Islamic thought's path towards modernization. Bektovic brings out the various complexities of these thinkers' views on the relationship between tradition and modernity, showing how the concealed interaction between ideology and methodology in the work of these thinkers shapes their viewpoints and the differences in interpretation among them.

Ulrika Mårtensson, in "Islamic Order: Al-Bannā's Hermeneutical Pragmatism and the Muslim Brotherhood's Interpretation", clarifies the significance of pragmatism in Ḥassan al-Bannā's religio-political thinking, as the touchstone for understanding the hermeneutics Bannā develops in his writings concerning Šarīʿa as a 'frame of reference' (*marǧaʿiyya*) for legislation, and his accompanying vision of an 'Islamic order' (*niẓām islāmī*). Challenging the prevalent view that Bannā's writings did not have any lasting effect on the subsequent development of the Muslim Brothers, especially as regards their transformation towards participation in electoral politics, and approval of democratic governance, Mårtensson argues that the recent breakthroughs, which have all contributed to radical changes in the Brothers attitudes towards the political sphere are, in fact, guided by a deep commitment to Bannā's contextual and pragmatist approach vis-à-vis matters of interpretation (*al-iǧtihād*) and legislation (*al-tašrīʿ*), and not a departure from, or a radical modification of, Bannā's ideas and methodology, as some modern scholars have suggested. Mårtensson concludes by pointing out this insight as an important point of departure for further research that acknowledges and takes seriously the pragmatist character of the Brothers oeuvre and their contemporary predicament.

Tina Dransfeldt, in "Transcending Institutionalized Islām, Approaching Diversity: ʿAbdelmaǧīd Šarfī's Conception of a Qurʾānic Ethics of Liberation", focuses on "the intellectual enterprise" of the Tunisian thinker, ʿAbdelmaǧīd Šarfī and his historical critical reading of the Islamic tradition. In specifically examining Šarfī's notion of the Qurʾān as an oral discourse rather than a written text, Dransfeldt shows how Šarfī's re-appropriation of the 'prophetic message' both (1) clarifies the pre-institutional phase of Islām, which preceded the formation of orthodoxy as a means of ensuring the confessional unity of the community; and (2) uncovers what was then an original pre-orthodox phase enriched by doctrinal diversity and characterized by open "dialogue, debate, and dispute". When seen in this manner, Dransfeldt argues, the hermeneutic position that Šarfī

adopts appears as significantly different from - not analogous to - the apologetic methods of inquiry that characterizes the Muslim reformist trend.

Joshua A. Sabih, in "Under the Gaze of Double Critique: De-colonisation, De-sacralisation and the Orphan Book", focuses on a rarely recognized discourse within contemporary Arab-Islamic thought, characterized by a 'double-critique' vis-à-vis the self and its object in its multifarious manifestations, regardless of whether this object takes the form of the 'West' or 'Islām'. As advanced by the French-Moroccan intellectual al-Khaṭībī, this theory uncovers the ideological limitations of the enlightenment narratives of the so-called 'West', which reinforces the euro-centric hegemony in matters of science and philosophy in the name of universality. At the same time this theory deconstructs politico-theological narratives that seek to sacralise the interpretations generated by Islamic orthodoxy. In replacement of these essentially theo-centrist traditions that dominate both sides, Khaṭībī proposes an entirely new way of thinking that sets out to explore, interpret and make sense of other cultures in terms freed of relations of domination and binary oppositions.

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Tradition and Modernity in Contemporary Islamic Philosophy

Safet Bektovic

Abstract

In the aftermath of the cultural renaissance movement (naḥḍa), especially during the second half of the 20th century, philosophy succeeded in regaining the status it enjoyed in medieval times as an important part of the Muslim intellectual discourse. In recent decades, philosophical thought (falsafa) has gained more prominence and relevance, especially with regard to the Islamic debate about the role and function of the Islamic tradition in the contemporary modern world. In this debate, Muslim philosophers deal with various questions and issues, foremost among them: the concept of knowledge, the wider question of reform (iṣlāḥ), and the relationship between religion and secularism. How Muslim thinkers and philosophers understand the questions and how they answer them vary widely, depending on their methodological approach to these issues - metaphysics, historicity, hermeneutics, and deconstruction – as well as their different positions regarding the role of philosophy in relation to contemporary Islām in general and its role in understanding the Islamic tradition's relation with modernity in particular. The aim of this paper is to shed some light on the methodological diversity in contemporary Muslim philosophy, through readings of the work of four thinkers.

Philosophical perspectives on tradition and modern challenges

The Islamic religious tradition has always been an important subject of reflection of Muslim philosophers. The task of rethinking the intellectual traditions of Islām from a modern point of view, and the task of questioning the epistemological leanings of these traditions, became topical in the first half of the 20th century, especially in the decades following World War II. It was a period in which many Muslim countries gained independence from both colonial powers, where the Muslim intellectual elite - lay intellectuals like the religious-minded - sought ways to understand the new role of Islām in society. In a situation where different ideological movements and political initiatives were raised and promoted – e.g. Islamization of society with inspiration from classic Islamic models, the return to Islamic tradition by weighting the Islamic morals and traditional cultural patterns, the establishment of secular states according to Western models - explaining the new reality of the Muslim world became the urgent task of philosophy.

Philosophical thinking seems to be particularly relevant in discussions about Islamic reform and tradition in the light of the challenges posed by the modern Western world. This paper will shed light on four distinct philosophical positions regarding the relationship between the Islamic tradition and modernity. Each position will be exemplified by presenting a distinguished philosopher, followed by a comparative discussion of each philosopher's perspective on the issue at hand.

Islamic epistemology and the continuity of the religious tradition: Seyyed Ḥossein Naṣr

A number of Muslim intellectuals from the second half of the 20th century were concerned with a critical analysis of Modern Western science and technology. Some of them were particularly critical of the modern Western epistemology and sought to formulate an Islamic alternative to the conception of Modern science. One of those who assumed a skeptical stance towards the modern Western concept of science was the Malaysian philosopher Naquib al-Attas (b. 1931). As a counterbalance to the secularization of knowledge, he introduced the term "Islamization of knowledge" in the 1970's as a way of "reconstructing" a concept of knowledge that is subjected to an Islamic epistemology, and hence freed from the control of secular rationalism, and, which insists on the unity between rational and revealed knowledge (Attas 2005:29-31).

Many other Muslim intellectuals adopted this idea and indulged in the task of explaining the concept of the Islamization of knowledge with the aim of designing a specific Islamic view of modern science. According to the Palestinian-American philosopher Ismāʿīl Farūqī (d.1986), the Islamization of knowledge was a way to adjust modern sciences to the religious and ethical ideals of Islām, thus making them useful and relevant for Muslims in a contemporary context. Iraqi-born Ṭāha Ǧābir al-ʿAlwānī (b. 1935) was concerned with the anthropological aspect of knowledge and sought to formulate a synthetic *iǧtihād*-methodology by combining the doctrine of *tawḥīd* (believe in the oneness of God's nature) with a rational epistemology.

The Iranian scholar Seyyed Ḥossein Naṣr (b. 1933) also advocates the adoption of this approach, but he rejects the possibility of reconciling secular and traditional methodology, modern and traditional science. In his view, these attempts at reconciliation are based on an epistemological break with traditional thinking and reduce reality to its material, empirical manifestations. Instead of this modern epistemology, which asserts human reason as the universal foundation of science, Naṣr prefers a traditional epistemology, which maintains the unity between spirituality and reason, reason and

revelation, and which, according to him, corresponds with the Islamic concept of God and its world-view[1].

According to Naṣr, the world must be studied as a "cosmic text", that is, as the revelation of God. However, in order to re-establish a holistic understanding of the world it is necessary to return to a traditional way of thought, which insists on the unity between *scientia*, conceived as a rational-scientific interpretation of the world's structure, and *sapientia*, conceived as a Gnostic interpretation of the symbols in that structure (Stenberg 1996, Naṣr 1993, 1981a).

Tradition, modernity and secularism

Naṣr assumes a fundamentally skeptical stance towards Western Modernity and modern sciences. According to him, the background of Western modernity is provided by the secular humanism, whose evolution starting from the period of Renaissance has resulted in the separation of morality and knowledge from their divine origin. This is reflected in man's exploitative approach and attitude towards nature and his inability to obtain a holistic understanding of reality. It is, thus, necessary to re-establish the original relationship between man and nature and to contest the "biased" (secular) conception of reality. To accomplish this goal, traditional sciences and learning materials must form an integral part of the new educational system[2]. This further presupposes developing a new and powerful intellectual elite. And this was exactly what happened in some parts of the Muslim world. Muslim intellectuals and organizations, inspired by the idea of traditionalism, established during the 1980's a number of forums and centers at which they propagated traditional thinking through publications, seminars and conferences[3].

[1] Naṣr does not make use of the term "sacred science", but insists on the Latin expression *scientia sacra* to emphasize that it is the metaphysical object of science, which is sacred, and not science itself. On the other hand, the object of *sacred science* is the manifested, phenomenological dimension of reality, and its purpose is to demonstrate that the world has a metaphysical origin (Naṣr 1981a: 130-132).

[2] Naṣr is a Muslim exponent of so-called 'traditional' thought, also known as "traditionalism", is a philosophical-spiritual movement which emerged in the West in the mid-20th century and which defended the traditional religion, philosophy and science against modern secularism. Its conceptual origin could be traced back to a religious-philosophical school, which had been established during the Renaissance, known as Perennialism. The main idea of this school was that all world religions are an expression of an original, perennial wisdom, which had disappeared and which has to be revived (See e.g. Peter B. Clarke, 256-57).

[3] It is possible to identify three distinct levels within the traditionalist programme: The intellectual level, at which the main focus is to revive traditional religion, philosophy and science; the cultural level, which focuses on reviving traditional art, literature and architecture; and the social level, at

According to Naṣr, the task of reviving tradition is not exclusively an Islamic one. It also concerns other religions and cultures, particularly Christianity which, according to him, faces similar challenges coming especially from secular materialism. In order to create a common cross-religious consciousness regarding traditional thought and its relevance in modern times, it is necessary to implement comparative studies of religion as a way of promoting and furthering an understanding of the common metaphysical origins of religion.

With respect to current tensions between Islam and Christianity, Naṣr is convinced that the tension has roots neither in religion nor in ethical and moral differences, but rather in ideological factors. Apart from the secular interpretation of Christianity, he also points to the role of Muslim modernists and fundamentalists in the idelogization of Islām as another cause of this tension.

Naṣr assumes a critical stance especially towards the first Muslim modernists – such as al-Afġānī (d. 1897)[4], the Indian Muslim social reformer S. Aḥmad Ḫān (d. 1898)[5] and the Indian Muslim poet and philosopher Muḥammad Iqbāl (d. 1938)[6] - who advocated the reconciliation and integration of Islamic theology with modern rationalism, but who, says Naṣr, had no understanding of the inner essence of Western modernity. They believed that, by accepting and adopting Western rationalism and its socio-cultural trends and models, they could minimize and overcome Western dominance over Muslims, but, instead, their work resulted in Muslims turning their backs on their own tradition and looking for answers in Western ideologies, such as nationalism, Marxism and rationalism, which all originate from a secular mindset (Naṣr 1981b: 101-102).

On the other hand, from Naṣr's viewpoint, Muslim fundamentalists – let alone Wahhābīs and Salafīs - commit a great methodological error because they seek to revive the Islamic tradition without really understanding the historical background and context in which it emerged and evolved. They are concerned with the exterior forms and practices of the Islamic tradition, seeking to re-establish a system based on *Šarīʿa* without taking into consideration the inner dimension of the *Šarīʿa*. The tension between Islamic modernism and fundamentalism should therefore, be seen as an expression of the Muslim misconception of both Western modernity and the Islamic

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which traditionalists seek to revive traditional models of social, economic and political life.

[4] E. Kedourie, (1997), 1-66; N. R. Keddie, (1983), esp. 36- 129.

[5] See, for instance, C, Troll (ed. Mircea Eliada, 1987) "Sayyid Ahmad Khan"; also R. Ḥassan (ed. M. E. Sharpe, 2008), esp. 162-165.

[6] See, for instance, K. G. Saiyidain, "Progressive Trends in Iqbal's Thought" (ed. M. R. Ṣiddīquī, 1944), 42-107; also A. Ǧalāl, *Self and sovereignty*: *individual and community in South Asian Islam since 1980* (Cambridge UP, 2000), esp. 168-72, 174-85, and 327-29; also cf. Ḥassan (2008), 166-70.

tradition, says Naṣr. Whereas modernists accepted the rationality of modern science as being universal without questioning its epistemological and methodological background, fundamentalists pose as radical critics of Western ideologies while, at the same time, accepting Western technology as being reconcilable with the Qurʾān and 'genuine' Islām (Naṣr 1987: 18-21).

As a third party Naṣr identifies Muslim secularists. In his view, Muslim secularists - in their various guises - are guilty of a major error: they seek in a very artificial manner to accommodate basic Islamic beliefs with a secular worldview without understanding the relationship between the Islamic tradition and secularism and the difference between the absolute and the relative (Naṣr 1987: 81-92).

According to Nasr, the Islamic tradition is neither synonymous with the Qurʾān and Sunna, nor with so-called 'genuine' Islām (which is claimed by e.g. fundamentalists). Rather, it includes the entire history of Islām, as well as all the Islamic schools and movements, Islamic art and philosophy as well as Islamic institutions and sciences, which have maintained and upheld the metaphysical foundation of Islām. Hence, although the Islamic tradition is theologically and culturally plural and diverse, it maintains and reflects one and the same metaphysics. However, ever since modern and secular ideas spread to the Islamic world in the course of the 19th century, the survival and continuation of the Islamic tradition has been threatened, both in terms of its epistemology and the socio-religious practice of Muslims. From this perspective, therefore, an Islamic philosophy, or rather a Ṣūfī-based philosophy, has a main role in relation both to contemporary Islām and in the understanding of the Islamic tradition (Naṣr 1981b:1-15).

Criticism of the Arab-Islamic epistemology and tradition: Muḥammad A. al-Ǧābirī

In many regards the Moroccan philosopher Ǧābirī (1936-2010) presents a contrary view to Naṣr, especially in terms of his interpretation of the Arab-Islamic tradition and its multifold epistemologies. On the one hand, Naṣr maintains continuity of tradition (from the classical period to present time), while on the other hand, Ǧābirī argues for discontinuity (with the traditional thinking). At the same time, Nasr argues for a metaphysical-mystical foundation of epistemology, while Ǧābirī underlines its rational foundation.

Ǧābirī's philosophical project is based on an epistemological analysis of Arab-Islamic thought. More precisely, he differentiates between two traditions of thought in Arab-Islamic culture: a mystical, gnostic system of thought, originating in the *Mašriq* (the eastern part of the Arab world), and a rationalist system of thought, originating in the *Maġrib* (the western part of the Arab world). Although these two

systems, and the traditions that derived from them, have not existed independently of each other and cannot be regarded as unrelated, Ǧābirī aims at clarifying and emphasizing the differences between them in order to account for the relationship between the religious, mystical, and the rational aspects of the Arab-Islamic heritage, taking as his point of departure the emergence and development of classical Arab-Islamic thought. Seeking to identify and locate the rationality potentials of this thought Ǧābirī ascribes a central status to the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Rušhd (Averröes), regarding his philosophical oeuvre as a pivotal point in the entire history of Islām, as well as an ideal of Arab-Islamic rationality.

The foundation of Arab epistemology

The foundation of Arab-Islamic reason was, according to Ǧābirī, related to the determination of classical Islamic sciences, all of which can be traced back to the establishment of the first methods and models of thought that helped to shape Islām as a religious system. Within that framework, however, Ǧābirī differentiates between three modes of thought in this formative period: *bayān* (explication, explanation), *ʿirfān* (gnostic knowledge), and *burhān* (argumentation). Historically *bayān* is the oldest model of thought, which was established in connection with the conceptualization of Islamic philology. A key principle within this system is conclusion by analogy (*qiyās*), a method through which one seeks to explain the unknown by referring to the known. Originally *qiyās* was regarded as a methodological principle, which was especially relevant in terms of the codification of Arabic language, but was later defined as a universal method and became the leading principle in shaping specific disciplines, such as jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and theology (*ʿilm al-kalām*). Accordingly, the idea was to legislate new rules and develop legal doctrines in light of the Qurʾān and the practice of the Prophet which referred to similar circumstances and cases, and, furthermore, to explain theological problems, e.g. the justice of God and His attributes (*ṣifāt*), in analogy with the justice and attributes of man (Al-Jabri 2010: 67-68). According to Ǧābirī, determining the method of analogy as a standard model of explanation already in the constitutive period of Islām (*tadwīn*) had begun to function as an un-reflected "mechanical operation" and a "self-referential practice" which demanded neither methodological nor analytical examination. It played a great part in developing a conventional way of thought (*taqlīd*) through which knowledge was reproduced with a fixed reference (sacred text) without taking into account the historical

development of thought and the validity of the existing rules of analogy[7].

The second mode of thought, *ʿirfān* emerged and developed under the influence of mysticism, illuminative philosophy and ancient gnostic traditions. One of the main ideas framing this system of thought is the desire to achieve a divine, prophetic experience and to reach a gnostic perception of the world. For Ǧābirī this mindset reflects an alien element within Islām, contributing not only to a development in which the orthodoxy of Islām declined into mere artificial spirituality but also to the establishment of an interpretation which stressed the esoteric approach at the expense of the more rational and empirical approaches.

In contrast to the principles of *bayān* and *ʿirfān*, the third mode of thought, *burhān*, emerged as a result of a rational interpretation of Islām based on empirical observations and on rational argumentation, with the aim of explaining the world on its own premises and not on the premises of religion. *Burhān* as a mode of thought has as its point of departure in Aristotelian rationalism was introduced to Islām by the first Muslim philosophers, al-Kindī (d. 873) and al-Farābī (d. 950), but was later elaborated and developed further by Ibn Rušd as a peculiar rationality. Unlike his predecessors (al-Farābī in particular) who had a tendency to confuse Aristotle and Plotinus, Ibn Rušd succeeded in re-introducing the "Aristotelian" Aristotle and in developing a coherent rational system of thought with a clear methodological distinction between religious and philosophical methods (Al-Jabri 1999: 43-44).

In particular, Ǧābirī is very critical of Ibn Sīnā's and al-Ġazālī's way of employing *burhān*. These thinkers, says Ǧābirī, applied *burhān* as a strategy to justify their mystical interpretations. They advocated a sort of pseudo-intellectual mysticism, thus betraying the principles of *burhān*, at least as these were understood in the Aristotelian tradition. Arguably, Ibn Sīnā sought to integrate Neoplatonism with Islamic theology at the expense of Aristotle, whereas al-Ġazālī sought to integrate *Šarīʿa* with Ṣūfism at the expense of a rational interpretation of *Šarīʿa* (Al-Jabri 1999: 57-59).

In Ǧābirī's view, methodologically speaking, all mystical interpretations failed because they tended to neglect the difference between the interpreter and the object of interpretation, thus counteracting the development of a more objective, scientific understanding of reality where a critical distance to the object of interpretation is maintained.

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[7] Ǧābirī acknowledges the methodological and scientific relevance of *qiyās* within some disciplines, but he also calls attention to its limitations and consequences. He points out that the method of analogy is only valid if it is applied to phenomena that are of the same nature in the sense of having a common element, which the analogy refers to. Hence, one can employ *qiyās* within linguistics and, to some extent, jurisprudence, but not within theology where the transcendent is compared to the physical (Al-Jabri 1999: 18-21).

In contrast to this method, proponents of the rationalist approach, such as Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), al-Šāṭibī (d. 1388) and Ibn Ḫaldūn (d. 1406), were consistent in their employment of *burhān*, both as a method and as a foundation for interpretation. Ibn Ḥazm, for example, favored a literal and legalistic interpretation rather than mystical interpretations, while Šāṭibī helped to formulate a new *iğtihād* in accordance with the aims - or, *maqāsid* - of the *Šarīʿa*, and Ibn Ḫaldūn sought to explain society and history scientifically and was capable of ignoring the religious dimension.

A new rational approach to modernity

According to Ğābirī, the work of Ibn Rušd designates an "epistemological break" (*qaṭīʿa ibistimūluğiyya*) with mystical interpretations and the *qiyās* methodology, thus laying the ground for a new rationality based on a new interpretation of reality. Instead of compromising between revelation and reason, he accounted for their compatibility by asserting their epistemological heterogeneity. Religious problems, which relate to transcendence and metaphysics, were not to be justified by reason (*ʿaql*). Conversely, philosophy, which rests on rational argumentation, was not to be judged from a religious point of view. It was in respect to these principles that Ğābirī sought to revive the way of thought which Ibn Rušd represented and to make it a normative foundation on which modern Arab-Islamic rationalism was to be based (al-Jabri 1999:128; also El-Jaichi 2010: 89-95). Just as Ibn Rušd (Averröes) marked a break with medieval interpretations, "neo-Averroism" is meant to promote a similar break with contemporary Muslim intellectual discourses. This involves, according to Ğābirī, a break with dominant Arab-Muslim conceptions of tradition and modernity, especially fundamentalist and liberal readings. Both rely, to a great extent, on the classical *qiyās* method, thus preventing Arab-Muslim consciousness from developing in the direction of modern rationality.

Fundamentalists remain in an idealized past, as they seek to relive a fictional tradition, whereas liberals live in an un-real present, as they seek to implement Western models in an idealized context. Neither group succeeds in creating a realistic vision for Arabs/Muslims based on an objective interpretation of the tradition and of existing socio-political conditions. On the contrary, the former group presents and maintains a false idea of Islamic "authenticity" (*aṣāla*), whereas the latter suggests an alienated image of Islamic modernity (Al-Jabri 1999: 10).

Ğābirī also refers to a third approach - Arab Marxism - that, according to him, failed in the same way at similar critical points. Arab Marxists, he says, were also concerned with implementing a ready-made method, in this case historical materialism, without taking

into account the peculiarities of Arab history and the real challenges existing in contemporary Arab societies (Al-Jabri 1999: 13-14). In connection with his criticism of the Arab reason (*al-ʿaql al-ʿarabī*), Ǧābirī questions also the status of language and its role in the development of Arab-Islamic rationality. The traditional Arab way of understanding language as something that is normatively based on the Qurʾān, has, according to Ǧābirī, limited the possibilities of interpretation. Because language has been regarded as a "sacred tool" for interpretation, it exerted a "sacred influence" on the reader, which in turn has prevented the Arab and Muslim reader from pursuing an independent and objective relation to the text (El-Jaichi 2010: 39-45). Instead, the Arab Muslim reader appears as someone who submits himself to the structure of the text. One can argue that this is due to an ontologization of the Arabic language, which occurred in relation to the first interpretations of the Qurʾān and which was encouraged and supported by Muslim rulers who wished to maintain the religious vocabulary as a legitimizing tool. Classical scholars further contributed to this development as they allied themselves with the rulers and used the religious system of language as a way to limit and exclude alternative interpretations. In order to establish a modern Arab-Islamic science of language it is necessary in Ǧābirī's view to carry out a critical analysis of the meaning of language, including an analysis of the relationship between religious and non-religious (i.e., secular) languages, with the goal of liberating language and interpretation from religion. One must simultaneously carry out a critical analysis of the ideological foundation of Arab-Islamic philosophy that takes seriously the role of philosophy in relation to dominant structures of power (Al-Jabri 1999: 26-27).

Transformation of tradition to modernity: Ḥassan Ḥanafī

Perhaps no other philosopher has marked Egypt's intellectual and political life the way in which the Egyptian-born Ḥassan Ḥanafī (b. 1935) has. Since the 1960s Ḥanafī has been personally involved in the political life of the Egyptian society. Ḥanafī has gone through different phases of development, dedicated to very ideological positions at different times[8], a fact, which makes it difficult to fix his position within the Muslim philosophical landscape. John Esposito has referred to Ḥanafī as holding a middle position between, on the

[8] To begin with the Islamism of Sayyid Qutb attracted him, and by the age of 16 he had already joined the Muslim Brotherhood. However, when he began his philosophical studies he became more concerned with the modernist ideas of ʿAbduh. He later argued for Islamic socialism and ultimately became a proponent of an Islamic theology of liberation and of a hermeneutical re-reading of the Islamic sources as the basis for a religious and political transformation of Muslim consciousness.

one hand, the conservative and fundamentalist wing and, on the other hand, the secularist and communist wing. This middle stance is most clearly seen in Ḥanafī's endeavor to establish an Islamic left-wing, which builds on a continuation of M. ʿAbdu's reformist ideas with the ideological goal of reconciling Egyptian political movements and religious trends (Esposito 2001: 70).

Basically speaking, Ḥanafī's project aims to renew Arab-Islamic consciousness on the basis of a hermeneutic interpretation of the Qurʾān. He sees the Qurʾān as a multifocal phenomenon: a juridical code, a literary work, a philosophical text and a historical document. Inspired by Dilthey, Gadamer and Ricoeur he maintains that any interpretation is conditioned historically and determined by the interests and motivations of the interpreter. According to Ḥanafī, this is a reflection of the different traditions of interpretation and the intra-Muslim discussions on the interpretation of the Qurʾān, which have largely been characterized by specific political interests and confessional motivations (Hanafi 1995, I: 416-417). The text in itself is empty and, as such, the words are given meaning by the interpreter. Seen retrospectively the Qurʾān is a text that emerged in the past, and is therefore filled with content and meaning that reflects the socio-historical context in which it was written. The method, which helps us to both create meanings and understand the continuity between past, present and future, is hermeneutics (Hanafi 1995, II: 186).

When dealing with hermeneutics of the Qurʾān the point is to understand, first and foremost, the connection between the Qurʾānic passages which are "born into history", and their "meta-historical background." This can be achieved through a double movement: from text to reality and then from reality to text. The first movement is facilitated by employing the anthropology of language, which makes it possible to differentiate between the literary and the figurative, the exoteric (*al-ẓāhir*) and the esoteric (*al-bāṭin*), whereas the second movement requires one to understand the spirit of the time in which the interpreter lives, which in turn makes possible the appreciation of a Qurʾānic normativity (Hanafi 1995, II: 187).

The renewal of Islamic thought also involves a revaluation of classical Islamic sciences (*kalām*, *falsafa*, Ṣūfism and *fiqh*) with the goal of critically inquiring their role in shaping the contemporary Islamic consciousness. According to Ḥanafī, these sciences have, each in their own way, contributed to the communication and transmission of God's revelation: theology (*kalām*) has done so by formulating doctrines; philosophy (*falsafa*) by formulating worldviews and conceptions of man; Ṣūfism (*taṣawwuf*) by describing spiritual experience; and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) by expounding Islamic law. However, he argues that the main purpose of interpreting Islām must be to provide answers to existing challenges.

One of the main challenges facing Islamic sciences today is to explain the relation between facts and values. In order to do so they

must apply and integrate modern methods such as hermeneutics and phenomenology. Whereas hermeneutics helps us understand the relationship between the normativity of the Qurʾān as a primary frame of reference, phenomenology can help us understand the relationship between facts and values, between "being" and "having to". According to Ḥanafī, every fact reflects a value, whereas every value refers to a non-realizable fact. Some of the examples of the relation between a value and a fact within Islām are as follows: God's Speech is a value, prophecy is a fact; the unity of God is a value, justice is a fact; hope is a value, eschatology is a fact (Hanafi 2006: 232-234).

Universality and particularity of tradition and modernity

On the basis of this renewal theory vis-à-vis the Islamic cultural heritage (*al-turāṯ wa-l-tağdīd*) Ḥanafī argues for a specific Islamic understanding of modernity based on a harmonious relationship between tradition and modernity. In this connection, he rejects the West's claim to be representing a universal modernity, pointing out that Western values, like Islamic values, are also bound by time and space, and thus cannot be regarded as universal.

According to Ḥanafī, every tradition is characterized by a specific potential for development and by some specific possibilities for modernization. Accordingly, modern Western progress emerged as a result of a dialectic relationship between different elements which all played a part in influencing and shaping Western tradition. Hence, the Islamic path to modernity presupposes and requires a renewal of specific Islamic cultural values (material as well as spiritual) that have characterized Islamic tradition.

More specifically, Ḥanafī is interested in the plurality of models for progress and has thus accounted for different forms of progress: the scientific, the material, the intellectual and the moral. He further points out that different civilizations and societies have undergone different forms of progress. For instance, ancient Egypt experienced a remarkable mathematical and astronomical progress, ancient India experienced a characteristic spiritual progress, Persia experienced an institutional progress, Hellenistic Greece a philosophical progress, the Roman Empire a juridical progress etc. It is therefore wrong to conclude, based on current conditions and the fact that some areas and cultures have become modern while others continue to be determined by a pre-modern worldview, that progress is only possible within a specific geographical and cultural-historical frame or that it has a universal form.

Modernity, Ḥanafī argues, does not necessarily denote a break with tradition. Rather, the relationship between tradition and modernity reflects a tension between continuity and discontinuity. However, the two categories are not to be understood as fixed entities

as they are primarily methodological tools, which have the function of explaining the relationship between past and present and of constructing a corresponding identity. Drawing on the (Heideggerian) term *Dasein* as an expression of the timely continuity of existence, Ḥanafī argues that the emphasis of continuity and discontinuity is always determined by our approach to the problem of identity. Continuity is motivated by the idea of recognizable identity, whereas discontinuity is motivated by the idea of difference (Hanafi: 2005).

To an extent, therefore, all traditions consist of something universal and something particular and have a potential for renewing themselves. Furthermore, renewal is not necessarily synonymous with discontinuity as is exemplified by e.g. the Asian traditions (Japanese and Korean societies), which are traditional and modern at the same time. Still, Western countries have developed a dichotomous understanding of the relationship between tradition and modernity, which has been used as a model of interpretation in order to draw a clear boundary between the West and the so-called third-world countries.

Muslims can be modern without having to imitate the West. Indeed, Ḥanafī describes the Islamic way to modernity as a "change through continuity", where the goal is to maintain the link between the old (*al-qadīm*) and the new (*al-ǧadīd*). Philosophical hermeneutics plays a special role in this process. Not only does it account for the historical significance of revelation, it also promotes an understanding of the relationship between the universality of Islām and its manifold interpretations (Hanafi 2005: 391-392).

Deconstruction of Islamic orthodoxy and tradition: Muḥammad Arkoun

Unlike Naṣr, Ḥanafī and Ǧābirī who all operate with the same notion of a genuine or 'authentic' Islām, Arkoun's work settles with the idea of authenticity and his epistemology is of an entirely different type. He is fundamentally critical of any logocentic thinking whether it relates to contemporary Western or Islamic paradigm. He considers the logocentric approach to Islām as both hegemonic and reductive, and of having ultimately contributed to the mythologization and ideologization of Islām. In this sense Arkoun criticizes the Western interpretation of Islām as positivist and static viewing Muslim text sources as the central fixation point. This has the effect of reducing Islām to a dogmatic entity and Muslim communities and practices as empirical versions hereof. Arkoun is also critical of Muslim interpretations of Islām (traditional as well as modern), arguing that they are based on essentialist and ideological approaches to Islām, as they also share a common reference in an idealized past in a way that

seeks to reconstruct a "genuine" or authentic Islām based on the idea that an ultimate interpretation of Islām is possible.

In contrast to these approaches, Arkoun seeks to implement - at least according to his own claims - a new inter-disciplinary approach, within the framework of what he calls "applied Islamology", with two aims: (1) "a critical re-reading of the exhaustive Muslim Tradition, free from the dogmatic definitions of the existing literature on schools; and (2) the historicizing of contemporary Muslim discourse, which has been characterized by ideological references" (Arkoun 1997: 41). In addition, Arkoun uses the term "historical epistemology" to emphasize that the core of "applied Islamology" is not the interpretation itself, but the understanding of the historicity and plurality of interpretations within Islamic culture (Arkoun, 2006: 17-23, 97).

His starting point is a structural analysis of the ideological-epistemological background of the various forms under which Islām appears in our days. More precisely, Arkoun is interested in the orthodox interpretation, the deconstruction of which he considers as very crucial in this analysis. In a broad sense, the primary aim is to understand how orthodox Islām has evolved. Who defined orthodoxy and heresy, and what were the social, political and ideological factors that contributed to the making of orthodoxy in Islām? How and under what circumstances were certain interpretations appropriated as legitimate and correct, while others were rejected as illegitimate and heretical?

Indeed, Arkoun turns the normativity and cognitive aspects of the Qurʾān upside down arguing that the revelation (*al-waḥy*) was not to be understood as a normative speech, within which God orders Muslims to perform specific rituals and actions, but rather as a set of analytical categories and "meanings" to be understood within the framework of an "alliance" between man and God. The Qurʾānic verse 12:2, "We have sent it down as an Arabic Qurʾān so that you [people] may understand" implies, says Arkoun, that the Qurʾān was introducing a new "hermeneutic situation in Arabic", within which the interaction between the new idiom, the Qurʾānic language and the existing Arabic mentality resulted in the creation of a new normativity (Arkoun, 2009: 49-52).

The collection and canonization of the revelations was the most central event in the history of the Qurʾān because it turned the Qurʾān into an "officially closed corpus". It also invalidated the original openness that characterized the Qurʾānic revelations. In order to come to an understanding of this openness and the possible interpretations of the Qurʾān, it is necessary, according to Arkoun, to deconstruct the theological and political mechanisms, which played a part in determining the official interpretation. This implies the application of an archaeological method that is capable of uncovering the interplay between social, political and ideological factors, which formed part of

the original context in which the collection and canonization of the Qurʾān took place (Arkoun 2006: 86-88).

A first step towards realizing this goal is the understanding of the so-called *le fait islamique*[9], which includes the dogmatic, religious, ethical, cultural, ideological and social aspects of Islām and refers to the period when Islām was consolidated, i.e. from Prophet Muḥammad's death in year 632 to approx. 950, when the more influential orthodox schools determined the framework within which Islām was to be interpreted.

It was during this period that Islamic orthodoxy was formulated and defined. In Arkoun's view, since then Islamic thought has been characterized by a dogmatic interpretation of the Qurʾān, which in turn further reduced the Qurʾānic discourse to a holy scripture (or a divine "pre-text") while the Ḥadīṯ collections and juridical regulations have been pronounced as the dogmatic key references for interpretation.

Arkoun argues for a new, open and pluralistic epistemology and depicts this as the path to the emancipation of the (post-) modern human being from reductive and triumphal positivistic reason, which he refers to as 'tele-techno-scientific reason' (Arkoun 2006: 37,). Arkoun, it is true, takes the post-modern criticism of modernity as his starting point. But he does not align himself with Western post-modernism. He calls for the inclusion of marginal and peripheral interpretations, and he upholds the relevance of the transcendent as part of the new epistemology. In this respect, he is in accord with Derrida in his deconstruction of 'the imaginary', but he also acknowledges 'the transcendent signifier' as a reference in the actual deconstruction. Arkoun's approach thus can neither be considered religious nor secular, modern nor post-modern, in the strict meaning of these terms. Rather, his approach is an all-inclusive humanism, striving towards what he calls a 'meta-modernity' that transcends both modernity and post-modernity (Arkoun 2009: 18-19, 2006: 55).

Indeed, according to Arkoun, only an open epistemology enables an understanding of the universality and diversity of Islām. Existing theories on what is universal and diverse in Islām have emerged as the result of a dialectic between two contradictory tendencies: one that

[9] In order to describe the Islamic discourse from the period of revelation and its historical development, as well as the interpretation of the Qurʾān during the time of Prophet Muḥammad and after his death, Arkoun introduced two key-terms: *le fait coranique* and *le fait islamique*. *Le fait coranique* can be translated as the Qurʾānic fact or event, which denotes both a linguistic phenomenon and a mystical experience, i.e. the Prophet's oral transmission and dissemination of the Revelation with reference to the existing mythological worldview as an interpretational horizon. *Le fait islamique* designates the consolidation of the "Qur'anic event", and emphasizes the fact that the Qurʾānic revelations, as these were collected and canonized in a book (*Muṣḥaf*) by the earliest authorities, became the basis of Islamic orthodoxy, which also assumed an important role as a "Closed corpus" (Arkoun, 2006: 272-273, 280-282).

has constantly sought to unify and sacralize Islām, by constantly maintaining the sacred Tradition (with a capital "T"), and another that has sought to uncover the sacred and mark the human by emphasizing the local ethnic traditions (with a small "t") (Arkoun 2006:265-266). In order to reach an understanding of Islām in its multifarious facets, including the historical link between the sacred and the human, the orthodox and the heterodox, it is necessary to re-think or better said deconstruct all the interpretative traditions (the approved as well as the non-approved) making at the same time room for new potential interpretations.

Conclusion

In the above presentation of four modern Muslim philosophers - Naṣr, Ḥanafī, Ǧābirī and Arkoun - one can distinguish between two different but interrelated discussions: one theoretical, and the other practical. The theoretical discussion is closely linked to the role of philosophical interpretation, its objective, and its position (within the Islamic discourse) in relation to other disciplines; the practical discussion relates to the question of political engagement of intellectuals and the implications of this engagement on their philosophical thought.

In terms of the first mentioned area of discussion, it seems that all four agree that philosophy has a central and decisive role in the interpretation of Islām but from different angles. Ḥanafī and Arkoun are occupied with the interpretation of the Qurʾān as a starting point for validating their respective claims about the significance of philosophy, while Naṣr and Ǧābirī (in different ways) consider the theological constitution of Islām as a basis for understanding the entire development of Islām. But they share a common idea: there can be no understanding of the Islamic tradition without philosophical analysis and no adequate understanding of modern challenges is possible without philosophical reflections on Islām's relationship with modernity. In this regard one must also take note of the fact that these thinkers define Islamic philosophy terms of a certain understanding of its status and function vis-à-vis the question of modernization of Arab-Islamic culture, of the return to the cultural heritage of Islām:

a) to underpin a theological-metaphysical essence of the Islamic philosophical tradition, arguing for its un-changeability and its incompatibility with modernity (Naṣr); b) to explain its transformative potential, arguing for modernization as a function of the Islamic philosophical tradition and its dynamism (Ḥanafī); c) to reconstruct its dogmatic structure in order to define an new modern and more appropriate method of philosophical interpretation in Arab-Islamic culture (Ǧābirī); d) to deconstruct the ideological background of *falsafa* in order to keep all interpretations open, transcending both its

traditional and modern models (Arkoun). Unlike Naṣr, who maintains the position of philosophy within the so-called traditional thinking and traditional science, the last three are open to modern human sciences, and advocate more or less a multidisciplinary approach as an optimal framework for the exercise of philosophy.

Ḥanafī and Ǧābirī were both politically active and they worked from a conviction that their engagement is the best way to influence the development of society. Both were concerned with the development of their home countries and made a great effort in giving philosophical ideas a crucial role in the process of shaping modern Muslim identity. Although their own philosophical ideas were not easily accessible and directly attractive to the general population, they found ways to influence the development at the wide grass-root level. This they were able to do partly due to the fact that they had a socio-political role as university professors engaged in disseminating their ideas by taking part in public debates, as well as publishing popular and politically relevant texts. On the other hand, neither Naṣr nor Arkoun was politically engaged having the largest part of their career established outside their home countries, Naṣr in USA and Arkoun in France. Before the revolution in 1979, however, Naṣr was very dedicated to the establishment of philosophical studies in Irān where he had good relations to king Šhāh. After the revolution he assumed a key role, this time, however, in a project endeavored to the "Islamization of knowledge" and the establishment of Islamic educational institutions around the world. So unlike Arkoun he is known as a very engaged intellectual. Arkoun's involvement was primarily academic and his ideas have had only an indirect impact on the general Muslim public. His works might acquire more influence in the near future especially amongst the new generation of Muslim intellectuals, in the Arab world through translations as well as in Europe.

Appendix:

A Schedule of comparison of the understanding of Islamic tradition and the role of philosophy in the interpretation of Islām:

Seyyed Ḥossein Naṣr	**Ḥassan Ḥanafī**
1. Islamic tradition as a continuity. 2. Philosophy seeks to explain the metaphysical truth of Islām. 3. Philosophy helps to understand and preserve the non-changeability of Islām. 4. Philosophical thought is in its essence religious (prophetic philosophy). 5. Philosophy is based on a traditional epistemology and has no need of modern humanistic science.	1. Islamic tradition in process of changing. 2. Philosophy seeks to explain historical truth of Islām (relationship between tradition and modernity). 3. Philosophy helps to create a new, reformed Islamic consciousness. 4. The philosophical and the religious thought used to be in harmony. **5.**Philosophy should integrate modern sciences, like phenomenology and hermeneutics.
Mohammed Al-Ğābirī	**Muḥammad Arkoun**
1. Islamic tradition is ambiguous (*bayān*, *ʿirfān* and *burhān*). 2. Philosophy seeks to explain the constitution of Islamic reason. 3. Philosophy helps to make an epistemological break with traditional thought/consciousness (*bayān* and *ʿirfān*). 4. The philosophical and the religious thought must be separated (new- averröism). 5. Philosophy should include modern sciences like anthropology and linguistics.	1. Islamic tradition as a construction. 2. Philosophy seeks to deconstruct the 'authentic' Islam (deconstruction of orthodoxy). 3. Philosophy helps to demystify and de- ideologize Islamic consciousness and identity. 4. Neither religious nor secular thought but humanistic thought. 5. Philosophy should be part of an interdisciplinary endeavour (e.g., "applied islamology").

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"Islamic Order": Semeiotics and Pragmatism in the Muslim Brotherhood?

Ulrika Mårtensson

Abstract

The article argues that Ḥassan al-Bannā (d. 1949) developed a pragmatist hermeneutics, in the twofold sense that religious experience provides the framework for defining and interpreting political concepts; and that a concept acquires meaning through the action that an interpreter infers from it. The hermeneutic is analysed here also with reference to al-Bannā's concepts ʿaqīda (creed), niẓām islāmī (Islamic order), daʿwa (invitation), and minhāǧ (methodology), and by considering the Muslim Brotherhood's political development in the period 1990–2013.

> This, O my Brother, is the sum of what I wanted to tell you about our invitation, which is the interpretation [of a dream], which in its turn has [other] interpretations, and you are the Josef of these dreams.
>
> Ḥasan al-Bannā, *Daʿwatuna*, p. 32

The majority of studies of the Muslim Brotherhood have focused on the organization and its members' political behaviour. Several analysts have drawn attention to the pragmatism that characterized both the founder Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906–49) and the organization after him, meaning by pragmatism that he as leader and the organization adapted to different circumstances and were prepared to negotiate interests with other politicians and groups when necessary.[1] This article seeks to show that al-Bannā's political pragmatism had a hermeneutical dimension as well, by exploring the key concepts related to his program: *ʿaqīda* (creed), *daʿwa* (invitation), *niẓām islāmī* (Islamic order), and *minhāǧ* (methodology).

Sanāʾ ʿAbed-Kotob has showed that while the Muslim Brotherhood has adapted to changing circumstances and demands, the organisation has never abandoned al-Bannā's original objectives, to perform *daʿwa* for an Islamic all-encompassing social order based on Šarīʿa, which transcends national boundaries and unites the Muslim *Umma*.[2] Others have shown how the organisation between the 1990s and 2011 actually departed from al-Bannā's program, specifically his

[1] Abed-Kotob, 1995; Lia. 1998; Stacher, 2002; Utvik, 2005; Brown and Hamzawi, 2008; Mandaville, 2009; Harnisch and Mecham, 2009; Tamam, 2010; Pargeter, 2010; Gardell, 2011; Rosefsky Wickham, 2011.
[2] Abed-Kotob, 1995.

rejection of political parties, by preparing themselves for party politics, and coining the new concept 'civil Islamic state' (*dawla islāmiyya madaniyya*) – all the while maintaining al-Bannā's principle that properly applied Šarīʿa should be the legal framework of an Islamic order.[3] Sāmer Šeḥata and Joshua Stacher have described how when Brothers in 2005 entered parliament for the first time as a Muslim Brotherhood block, they were firmly committed to serving their constituencies and focused on the issues at hand, collaborating with secular parliamentary blocks in order to secure majorities. In this way, they infused a fresh democratic spirit into the nepotistic and moribund parliament, the authors argue.[4] Thus, up until 2006–7, research shows that the Muslim Brotherhood expanded beyond al-Bannā's principles in order to participate in politics, while retaining the general objective of 'Islamic order'. This suggests that 'Islamic order' is a concept that is subject to reinterpretation within the MB.

The religious ideas in al-Bannā's writings and within the Muslim Brotherhood have not received as much attention as the political. In a preliminary study, I have analysed al-Bannā's concept of the Qurʾān as constitution in terms of 'fundamentalism', defined as the belief that no power and no progress for the Muslim community is possible without attaching their faith and actions to God's own power. Only when the Qurʾān becomes the constitution (*dustūr*) of an implemented Islamic order will the Muslim community become united and truly empowered. I also argued that al-Bannā was inspired by Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 1328) concept *siyāsa šarʿiyya* for his idea that Islamic order requires *Šarīʿa* as its legal framework and that politics should be in line with Islamic or *Šarīʿa* principles.[5] Thus, al-Bannā's concepts of Islām and the Qurʾān are quite specific to him and his political vision. Concerning interpretation of the Qurʾān, al-Bannā held its meaning is linguistically and historically defined and that the authoritative sources are the classical commentaries, foremost of which al-Ṭabarī's (d. 923) *Ǧāmiʿ al-bayān fī taʾwīl ʾāy al-Qurʾān* ("The Encyclopaedia of Clarifications Concerning the Original Meaning of the Qur'anic Signs"); the medieval *asbāb al-nuzūl* works; and the Prophet's biography for historical context. However, at the individual level, true understanding of the Qurʾān comes through *išrāq*, 'illumination' of the believer's heart, when he or she understands the Qurʾān not only as a ritually recited text but also as the constitution of Islamic order. Al-Bannā attributed this view of the Qurʾān to Muḥammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905), the famous moderniser of Egypt's Sunni Islamic university al-Azhar and companion of Ǧamal al-Dīn al-Afġānī (d. 1897), the Iranian Šīʿite journalist, intellectual and campaigner for pan-Islamic unity against colonialism and for

[3] Brown and Hamzawy, 2008; Haqqani and Fradkin, 2008.
[4] Shehata and Stacher, 2006.
[5] Mårtensson, 2011, pp. 27–52; pp. 39, 43–46. On Ibn Taymiyya and *siyasa shar'iyya*, see also Laoust, 1986, pp. 27–28; and Hassan, 2010.

modern progress in the Islamic world. However, a similar view is also found in Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutics, as the idea that esoteric revelatory insight (*kašf*) can produce new meaning in the Qurʾān and new precepts of *Šarīʿa* (although not abrogate existing ones).[6]

Ḥāzem Kandīl's recent monograph on al-Bannā's and the MB's is based on fieldwork.[7] Kandīl argues that as long as the Muslim Brothers were in opposition and concentrated on providing social work, their essentially cultic belief that God would one day reward their pious labour with full political empowerment remained concealed from the public. However, after their wins in the general and presidential elections in 2011 and 2012, Brotherhood politicians and President Muḥammad Morsī put everything they had into inscribing their Islamist principles into a revised constitution, rejecting collaboration with secular parties, and even seeking to harness the army to their own cause. The reason for this shift is, Kandīl argues, their religious belief that it was God, not the people, who had granted them political power. To share power with the secular parties would thus have meant thwarting God's plan. Faced with massive popular opposition in July 2013, Morsī and his supporters exhibited traits associated with messianic cults: complete refusal to recognize the nature of the political crises and clinging to the belief that God would intervene on their behalf, as He did for the Prophet and his adversaries, and threatening their enemies with divine destruction. In this context, Kandīl argues, it is not strange that the Muslim Brotherhood was for the first time designated as a terrorist organisation.[8] Concerning the Muslim Brotherhood's approach to the Qurʾān, Kandīl claims that it relies on Sayyid Qutb's (d. 1966) famous literary interpretation, *Fī ẓilāl al-Qurʾān* ("In the Shade of the Qurʾān", or, figuratively, "Under the Influence of the Qurʾān"). Qutb embraced the Romantic ideal of creating oneself as a personality through artistic and emotional experiences. In the Muslim Brotherhood context, this principle was put into practice in such a way that Brothers and Sisters read the Qurʾān through the pious and self-effacing emotional disposition that the organisation fosters in its members, and which frames their *ad hoc* and, in Kandīl's view, thoroughly anti-scholarly way of interpreting the Qurʾān.[9]

This article takes as its point of departure the above described fact, that the Muslim Brotherhood have changed some of al-Bannā's key political principles and also coined new concepts, and the implication that follows from this fact, namely that the practical meaning of 'Islamic order' depends on the Brothers' activities in a

[6] Mårtensson, 2011, p. 46, ref. to al-Bannā, 1981, pp. 6, 26–27; on Ibn Taymiyya and *kashf*, Mårtensson, 2011, p. 39, ref. to Weismann, 2001, p. 267.
[7] Kandīl, 2015.
[8] Kandīl, 2015, p. 144.
[9] Kandīl, 2015, pp. 11, 41–42.

given context. I will explore this implication with reference to hermeneutical pragmatism, and to two more of al-Bannā's concepts, namely Islamic creed (*ʿaqīda*), and methodology (*minhāǧ*).[10] I will argue that al-Bannā's hermeneutics has enabled the Brothers to take considerable leeway in interpreting his conceptual framework. Contrary to Kandīl, who argues that the events in 2013 are a logical outcome of al-Bannā's religious thought as maintained within the Muslim Brotherhood, I hold that they were contingent upon a particular context and choices made by specific individuals. Al-Bannā's hermeneutics makes it equally possible for the Brothers to interpret the same concepts in the direction of consensus building and see that as the sign of divine empowerment.

Pragmatism

In Western contexts, pragmatism refers to an epistemology, hermeneutic and form of logic, which emerged among American academics in the late nineteenth century. Its founder was Charles Sanders Pierce (1839–1914), whose student John Dewey (1859–1952) and friend William James (d. 1910) further developed his theories. According to Christopher Hookway, pragmatist hermeneutics has three essential characteristics:[11]

1. All of the classic pragmatists identified beliefs and other mental states as *habits*. The content of a belief is not determined by its intrinsic phenomenal character; rather, it is determined by its role in determining our actions. The role of tacit habits of reasoning and acting in fixing our beliefs and guiding our actions is a theme that recurs in the work of all of the pragmatists.
2. All concepts and theories are instruments to be judged by how well they achieve their intended purpose. The content of a theory or concept is determined by what we should do with it.
3. A sign or thought is about some object because it is understood, in subsequent thought, as a sign of that object, rather than because it captures something essential pertaining to the object. The subsequent thought is the 'interpretant', i.e. what determines the interpretation. Furthermore, interpretation is generally a goal directed activity. In such cases, our action or the conclusion of our inference is the interpretant; interpretation is thus not primarily a matter of intellectual recognition of what a sign

[10] The arguments are based on two conference papers: 'How God's Power becomes the People's Power: Faith and Pragmatism in the Muslim Brotherhood', BRISMES Annual Conference 26–28 March 2012; 'Islamic Order: al-Banna's Pragmatism and the Muslim Brotherhood's Interpretation', EASR Annual Conference 11–15 May 2014.
[11] Hookway, 2008.

> means but of our inference of our own actions relative to the sign.

The last point relates particularly to Pierce, who developed the theory of semeiotics, or 'appearances as signs'. By 'signs' Pierce meant 'qualities, relations, features, items, events, states, regularities, habits, laws', i.e. everything that has meanings, significances, or interpretations, or 'the world of appearances (phaneron)'.[12] According to Robert Burch, the sign for Pierce is that which means something and the interpretant is that to which the sign represents an object. As Burch points out, the interpretant refers to the mental state or act of the interpreter as s/he interprets the sign. This mental act of interpretation then itself becomes a sign of the same object that was the sign of the original appearance of object. Consequently, as Burch puts it, 'everything in the phaneron, because it is a sign, begins an infinite sequence of mental interpretants of an object'. It follows that the signs constitute a system, which is in constant evolution.[13] Thus, given that apprehension of signs is the way in which we gain knowledge, it was of central importance to Pierce to ascertain that we can attain clear conceptions of objects, which is the pragmatist epistemology's main contribution:

> the rule for attaining the third grade of clearness of apprehension is as follows: Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.[14]

In several ways, pragmatism emphasises the importance of emotions: for apprehension, since interpretants are effectively mental states; and for the evolutionary process of apprehension as a whole. Pierce viewed *agape*, selfless love in the sense of the Gospel of John, as the force that drives evolution, according to which entities sacrifice their own self-perfection in order to help neighbour entities to advance. According to Burch, he developed his standpoint as a critique of Herbert Spencer's materialistic evolutionism and the 'social Darwinism' of his day.[15] Pierce's friend William James developed his version of pragmatism as a response to the modern sciences and to what he perceived as the dominance of empiricism and logic over emotion and religion. James' famous study *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) ranks among the classics in the discipline Psychology of Religion.[16] In James' view, the dominance of

[12] Burch, 2014.
[13] Burch, 2014.
[14] Pierce, 2001 [1878].
[15] Burch, 2014.
[16] See for example the contributions to Ferrari, 2002; and Bridgers, 2005.

empiricism within philosophy and science left no room for religion and imagination. He sought to develop a system that could accommodate scientific loyalty to facts with confidence in values and imagination; a confidence that he claimed was rooted in religious experience and romanticism.[17]

As we shall see below, Ḥasan al-Bannā in his treatises described how the Muslim Brothers infer meaning from his concepts as they work towards specific goals; and the contemporary Freedom and Justice Party emphasise the need for religion and the emotional life for true progress. Indeed, Kandīl's interviews reveal that the Muslim Brotherhood does seek to foster a particular self-sacrificing and all-devoted state of mind in its members in order to keep a unified program and practice in place. Viewed from the perspective of pragmatism, such a strategy appears to echo Pierce's view that 'good evolution' requires the Evangelical self-sacrifice for the greater common good.

Assuming, then, that there are some affinities between pragmatism and the Muslim Brotherhood and its founder, there are two possible sources from which al-Bannā could have been acquainted with such ideas. The first is the teachers training program that he was enrolled in at the modern college Dār al-ʿUlūm in Cairo, founded in 1871, and from which he graduated in 1927, and which offered a combination of Islamic disciplines with a modern western science curriculum.[18] While al-Bannā never studied English language, he did read Arabic translations of contemporary European thought.[19] We do not know whether pragmatism was part of the Dār al-ʿUlūm curriculum; it could have been so.

The second possible source is the modernist *Salafiyya* movement connected with Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Rašīd Riḍa (d. 1930), which at least in Riḍa's version drew heavily on Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), the famous *muǧtahid* or reformer of the Ḥanbalī legal methodology.[20] Al-Bannā was acquainted with this strand of *Salafiyya* through his father's contacts and work on Ḥanbalī sources, and through his own personal contacts with *Salafiyya*-oriented circles in Cairo and

[17] Hookway, 2008.
[18] Mitchell, 1969, p. 3; Lia, 1998, p. 25. Note that where Mitchell claims that al-Bannā chose to intellectually reject modern western sciences and focus on Islamic sciences, Lia who has used many more sources shows that al-Bannā in fact prioritized the modern teachers training program offered by Dar al-ʿUlūm over al-Azhar, which was another option and one favoured by his father.
[19] Krämer, 2010, p. 19.
[20] Sedgwick, 2010, pp. 122–23; Calder, 2007, pp. 235–36. Sedgwick claims that Ibn Taymiyya played a very limited role for 'Abduh since he hardly mentioned him and that it was Riḍa who in his writings assigned a significant role for Ibn Taymiyya in ʿAbduh's thought. Calder argues on the contrary, that Ibn Taymiyya is the only medieval jurist that ʿAbduh held in high esteem and that ʿAbduh followed Ibn Taymiyya's methodology of limiting the number of doctrinally acceptable sources of law and theology.

Alexandria.[21] He also identified the message of his own organization as a "*Salafiyya* message".[22] According to Yūnus ʿAlī, *Salafī* hermeneutics from Ibn Taymiyya onwards is comparable with modern pragmatism. It distinguished itself from Aš'arī hermeneutics by locating meaning not in the linguistic concept itself but in the communicative situation:

> What distinguishes the *Salafī*s' communication model from its mainstream rival is the neutralisation of the difference between *wadʿ* (assigned meaning; UM) and use. The *Salafī*s main contention is that conventions are not established in isolation from the communicative situations, but are, rather, set up, and modified by them. Hence, words have elastic rather than firmly fixed meanings so that they may change according to the verbal and non-verbal contexts in which they are uttered. Accordingly, if an expression is isolated from context, it will no longer be part of the language, simply because it cannot be used to communicate in a well-defined manner.[23]

Ibn Taymiyya's reason for choosing a pragmatic hermeneutics over the Aš'arite foundational one would have to do with his taking issue with the legal and theological mainstream and thus needing a methodology which allowed for new interpretations of given concepts, on the premise that the dominant methodologies had lead the Muslims beyond the Prophet's *sunna*. Ibn Taymiyya limited the consensus (*iğmaʿ*) about the meanings of the Qurʾān and the Prophet's Sunna to the Companions, who were the ones who had experienced the Prophet's guidance of the community through divine revelation. It was thus the Qurʾān, *ḥadīṯ*, and the Companions' rulings that provided the sources for further interpretation through inductive reasoning.[24]

In al-Bannā's case, the fact that he, like his contemporaries in the *Salafiyya* movement, sought to break out of established scholarly definitions of the Qurʾān and Islām and to thereby reconnect the Muslims with the divine guidance implies that a hermeneutics along the line of Ibn Taymiyya's pragmatist one would have been a suitable methodological choice. There are obvious differences between Ibn Taymiyya and al-Bannā. Ibn Taymiyya was a scholar and *muğtahid* within the Ḥanbalī

[21] Lia, 1998, pp. 22–5; Krämer, 2010, pp. 7, 22–4.
[22] Mitchell, 1969, p. 14, quoting al-Bannā, *Risalat al-mu'tamar al-khamis*; see also Krämer, 2010, p. 28.
[23] Yūnus ʿAlī, 2000, p. 8; cf. pp. 87–140.
[24] Laoust, 1986.

school,[25] who sought to develop a doctrinal and legal system that had political implications, while al-Bannā was a modern schoolteacher and political activist seeking to empower first the Egyptian people and then the Arab Muslim community by inviting them to become worthy of power in the eyes of God. Yet they shared the belief that the correct apprehension of the Islamic creed of divine Oneness and the mental states that accompany this apprehension *is* a way of behaving politically in this world through self-sacrifice, which will inevitably have beneficent outcomes.

In the treatise *al-ʿAqāʾid*, al-Bannā developed the creed that underpinned his organisation and its objectives, through the conventional genre of *ʿaqīda*, 'creed' or 'dogma'. Earlier examples of *ʿaqīda* include al-Ṭabarī's (d. 923) *Ṣariḥ al-Sunna* ("The True Sunna") and *al-Ṭabṣīr fī maʿālim al-dīn* ("Discerning Discourse Concerning the Dogma of Religion", written for the scholars in his home province Tabaristan);[26] and Ibn Taymiyya's famous *al-ʿAqīda al-Wasitiyya* ("The Creed for the City of al-Wāsiṭ"), which treats the divine Oneness and its implications concerning the group who understand and practice it correctly.[27] Producing an *ʿaqīda* treatise is often connected with scholarly innovation. Thus, al-Ṭabarī was a *muğtahid muṭlaq* who developed his own legal methodology, *al-maḏhab al-ğarīrī*, while Ibn Taymiyya staked out new positions with reference to the Ḥanbalī school by employing reasoning in new creative ways, arguing that reason is identical with revelation.[28] Al-Bannā adopts a similar approach in his *ʿaqīda*, which he introduces with the argument that the Qurʾān and *Sunna* encourage Muslims to use reason to gain knowledge, in general as well as about the meaning and implications of Islām. As Ibn Taymiyya did, al-Bannā identifies revelation with reason, in the sense that no scientifically or rationally sound knowledge could be in contradiction with it. On this basis, al-Bannā defines his creed as *al-ʿaqīda al-naẓariyya al-sahla* ("the clear rational creed"), and *al-ʿaqīda al-fiṭriyya fī al-nufūs al-salīma* ("the creed which is natural to the sound souls").[29] The constituents of the creed is that there is a Creator – God – Who has created everything and therefore is beyond anything which the human intelligence can fathom, in the same time as that knowledge is innate to the human intellect.[30] It appears that al-Bannā is echoing Ibn Taymiyya's concept of *fitra* as referring to humanity's faculty of natural intelligence.[31] In

[25] On Ibn Taymiyya's relationship with Ḥanbalī *fiqh*, see Laoust, 1939; al-Matroudi, 2006.
[26] Sourdel, 1968, pp. 177–99; al-Tabari, 1996.
[27] Ibn Taymiyya, 1973.
[28] On al-Ṭabarī's legal methodology, see Stewart, 2004; Mårtensson, 2016. On Ibn Taymiyya's synthesis of reasoning and Ḥanbalī *fiqh*, see Laoust, 1939; Rapoport, 2010.
[29] al-Banna, 1978, pp. 28; 53.
[30] al-Banna, 1978, p. 28.
[31] Holzman, 2010, p. 178.

the introductory paragraphs of *al-ʿAqāʾid* he refers to Q. 30:30: 'It is the original nature according to which God fashioned mankind (*fiṭrat Allāh al-latī faṭara al-nās ʿalayhā*) and there is no altering God's creation; that is the upright religion'.[32]

Against this background, I have identified four components that I assume connect al-Bannā's creed with his hermeneutics and political program. The first component is God's function as Creator and Sustainer, which means that God is the ultimate source of human life and power. Secondly, God is knowable in this capacity through His attributes (*ṣifāt*) contained in the Qurʾān and *ḥadīṯ*; in fact, the bulk of this *ʿaqīda* is about the divine attributes or, with a pragmatist term, the signs through which God can be apprehended as a way of being and acting in the world.[33] Thirdly, the creed is not only rationally comprehended but also *experienced emotionally*: 'You will experience yourself [the examples] I will present to you' (*liʾan taš ʿur fī nafsika bimā qaddamtu laka*).[34] This point connects with the pragmatist insistence that the emotional experience is part of the apprehension of a sign. Fourthly, al-Bannā concludes the creed by stating, programmatically, that the way to proceed regarding interpretation of God's attributes and their meaning in the Qurʾān and *ḥadīṯ* is to follow the methodology of the first generation, *maḏhab al-salaf*. He argues:

> The conclusion from this investigation is that the first generation (*al-salaf*) and their successors (*al-ḫalaf*) agreed that the objective is not the obvious (meaning) that is common knowledge and is the general interpretation; and that any interpretation, which contradicted the legal principles (*al-uṣūl al-šarʿiyya*), is unacceptable. Consequently, they restricted the debates about how to interpret the verbal expressions to what is acceptable in terms of legislation (*bimā yağūz fī al-šarʿ*). This is quite limited, as you can see, and something to which even some among the first generation (*al-salaf*) resorted. Today the most important of the (many) concerns, which Muslims need to address, is to unite their ranks and speak with one voice as far as possible, with God as our reckoning and blessing.[35]

Thus, al-Bannā on the one hand opens up and broadens the scope of interpretation compared with the legal scholars' agreed-upon subject

[32] al-Banna, 1978, p. 28. My modification of Majid Fakhry, 2000; Fakhry renders *qayyim* as 'true', while I translate it as 'upright', in line with the beginning of the verse.
[33] al-Banna, 1978, p. 28 *passim*.
[34] al-Banna, 1978, p. 28.
[35] al-Banna, 1978, p. 78.

matters, and on the other hand asserts the need for a new uniformity of vision.

In the treatise *Daʿwatuna* ("Our Invitation"), al-Bannā draws the contours of this vision by reference to the concept *daʿwa*, usually translated as 'mission' or 'call'.[36] However, *daʿwa* also means 'invitation', for example to a party. This meaning captures the sense of empowerment that is central to al-Bannā's vision. As Gudrun Krämer has pointed out, al-Bannā was, like a great many intellectuals and reformers of his time, an avid reader of early Islamic history, which served him as the ideal Golden Age which Muslims should seek to revive in order to perfect both the Muslim community and mankind as a whole.[37] However, since the real source of power is God the Creator, in order to attain empowerment, Muslims must dedicate their entire existences and beings to the service of God:[38]

> Annihilation (*fanāʾ*):
>
> We want our people (*qawmunā*) to know (. . .) that this invitation (*daʿwa*) is suitable only for he who embraces it in all its aspects and devotes to it everything that it will cost him in terms of his self, his property, his time, and his health: 'Say: "If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your spouses, your relatives, the wealth you have gained, a trade you fear might slacken, and dwellings you love are dearer to you than God and His Messenger or than fighting in His way, then wait until God brings His command; God does not guide the sinful people (*al-qawm al-fāsiqīna*)".'[39] This is an invitation (*daʿwa*), which does not accept being shared [with anything else] for its nature is unity, and he who is prepared for it shall live through it and it shall live through him. He who is too weak for this burden shall be deprived of the rewards awaiting those who struggle (*ṯawāb al-muǧāhidīna*), and he will be among the left-behind (*al-muḫallafīna*) and the slackers, and God will extend His invitation to another people in his stead: 'Humble towards the faithful but mighty towards the unbelievers. They fight in the way of God and do not fear anybody's reproach. This is a favour which God bestows on whomever He wishes'[40].[41]

Al-Bannā's *daʿwa* means that in order to attain God's guidance, it is not enough to believe in the creed and participate in rituals: one must

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[36] Eickelman and Piscatori, 1996; Mahmood, 2005.
[37] Krämer, 2010, pp. 97–103; Kandil, 2015, pp. 88–89.
[38] Cf. Mårtensson, 2011, pp. 44–45.
[39] Qurʾān 9:24.
[40] Qurʾān 5:54.
[41] al-Bannā, 1977a, p. 8.

commit one's entire being. Without this commitment, there can be no empowerment, since all power comes from God. It is fitting that he headed the section 'Annihilation' (*fanāʾ*), which is a Ṣūfī concept signifying the annihilation of the self in the union with the divine. However, as in Ṣūfī contexts, there is an exclusive claim involved here: not everyone is fit to accept the invitation, which means that not all Muslims are equally capable of attaining divine guidance. Hence, the passage implies that al-Bannā perceived the MB as an elect group in this respect. The all-encompassing commitment of the individual is mirrored in the all-encompassing scope of *daʿwa*:

> a *salafī* invitation (to God's power); a *sunnī* path; a Ṣūfī truth; a political organisation; a sports club; an association for learning and culture; an economic company; and a social theory (*fikra*).[42]

The social theory implied establishing an all-encompassing (*šāmil*) Islamic social order, including Islamic government, and based on Šarīʿa, which is equally all-encompassing.[43] Al-Bannā believed society was unable to progress without the people enacting Islam in the true way, and therefore individuals applying Islām should permeate all spheres of society.[44] The majority of those who were attracted to al-Bannā's invitation were young men, often immigrants from the countryside to the big cities, who made up a new class of urban professionals who were ambitious but excluded from political power and cultural influence, which was concentrated in the hands of elites close to the colonial rulers. Al-Bannā's invitation to empowerment through Islām was available to all Muslims regardless of social class, which made it attractive for this growing group of Egyptians.[45] In other words: his organization's exclusivity cut across existing social hierarchies, creating a new elite of pious civil servants and professionals.[46]

Islamic Order

The social theory is signified by the key concept *niẓām islāmī*, 'Islamic order'. Al-Bannā's *daʿwa* implied that all spheres of society should be governed by Islām, including government (*ḥukūma*). Indeed, Islamic government would be the crown achievement that marked the Egyptian society's transformation into an Islamic order,

[42] Quotation from al-Bannā, *Risalat al-muʾtamar al-khamis*, p. 14, cited in Tamam, 2010, p. 94; also in Mitchell, 1969, p. 14.
[43] al-Bannā, 1977b, p. 60.
[44] al-Bannā and Wendell, 1978, pp. 17–8; Lia, 1998, pp. 74–6.
[45] Lia, ibid.
[46] See Krämer, 2010, on al-Bannā's strong civil servant-ethos.

and which would attract the attention of other countries. In this manner, by inspiring others, Islamic government would enable political unity among Islamic countries:

> If we had Islamic government (*ḥukūma islāmiyya*) that was true to Islām, of sincere faith, free to think and edify, for which learning the true knowledge was the greatest treasure, which inherited the might of the Islamic order (*al-niẓām al-islāmī*), and if we had faith in it as the cure for the people and guidance for mankind as a whole, we could strengthen this world by the name of Islam so that other states would investigate and observe it and want it for themselves, and so that we could conduct them to it, through continuous invitations, conviction, proof, delegations, and other means of information and communication.[47]

In the treatise *Naḥwaʾl-nūr* ("Towards the Light") al-Bannā describes Islamic government in some more detail. Negatively, it excluded political parties because they divide the nation and the community. Positively, it involved bringing the law in line with the principles of Islamic *Šarīʿa*; strengthening the bonds between Arab and Islamic countries and assessing the loss of the Caliphate; diffusing the Islamic spirit and teachings throughout the government departments and the military; anti-corruption measures; and surveillance of government functionaries to ensure their adherence to Islamic values both professionally and in their private lives; and dissolving the distinction between public-private domains.[48] As Lia has pointed out, al-Bannā's opposition to political parties was not because he opposed popular representation, as such. Rather, he saw the problem with the parties of his time that they represented only the elites and their interests. He envisioned a consultative 'national body' (*hayʾa waṭaniyya*) composed of representatives of all groups in society. This body should function within what he called 'constitutional consultative rule' (*ḥukm dustūrī šūrī*).[49] The following is his definition of 'constitutional':

> to preserve the freedom of the individual citizen, to make the rulers accountable for their actions to the people and finally, to delimit the prerogatives of every single authoritative body. It will be clear to everyone that such basic principles correspond perfectly to the teaching of Islām concerning the system of government. For this reason, the Muslim Brothers consider that of all the existing systems of government, the constitutional system is the form that best suits Islām and Muslims.[50]

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[47] Al-Bannā, 1950?, p. 23.
[48] Al-Bannā, 1977c, pp. 109–10.
[49] Lia, 1998, pp. 204–5.
[50] Ibid, p. 204, quoting al-Bannā, 1939, p. 22.

Thus, Islamic order in al-Bannā's writings implies constitutional government, with rule of law, accountability, a notion of separation of powers, and civil rights and freedoms within a consultative system, but without political parties and general elections. To safeguard the Islamic character of government and society, the law would have to be *Šarīʿa*, but interpreted in a much broader way than in traditional *fiqh* so as to meet the needs of a modern nation.

Hermeneutical pragmatism?

In *Daʿwatunā* al-Bannā describes three pillars (*arkān*) around which the Muslim Brotherhood theory (*fikrat al-iḫwān*) revolves, and which can be seen as also defining his hermeneutics:[51]

1. *The sound methodology (al-minhāǧ al-ṣāliḥ)*: The Brothers have found it in God's scripture and the *Sunna* of His Messenger and the rulings of Islām from the time when the Muslims understood them at their face value in a fresh and pure way, far from internal intricacies and falsities. [The Brothers] devote themselves to studying Islām according to these principles in an easy, broad and accessible manner.
2. *Activists guided by the faith (al-ʿāmilūna al-muʾminūna)*: The Brothers apply themselves to practicing what they have understood about God's religion in an uncompromising manner. Praise God, they are faithful in their thoughts and confident in their objectives and trusting that God will support them as long as they work on His behalf and proceed under the guidance of God's Messenger.
3. *Resolute and trustworthy leadership*: The Muslim Brothers have found [its leadership] to be so, and thus they obey it and work under its standard.

The second pillar expresses the idea that the Muslim Brothers' application of Islām follows from their understanding of it; while the third introduces the organisation's leadership as the Muslim Brothers' authority. It appears to follow that the authority includes interpretation. However, in the immediately following paragraph al-Bannā declares that the Brothers' understanding of Islām will vary depending on the person and the context:

> This, O my Brother, is the sum of what I wanted to tell you about our invitation (*daʿwa*), which is the interpretation [of a dream], which in its turn has [other] interpretations, and you

[51] al-Bannā, 1977a, p. 32.

> are the Josef of these dreams. If our [plans] are attractive to you, your efforts add to ours as we work together along this path, with God as the guarantor of our success and yours. He is our reckoning, and the blessing of the deputy is the same as the blessing of the Lord and the blessing of the Supporter (al-Banna 1977a:32).

Pragmatism implies that the meaning of a sign depends on the practical outcomes that the interpreter has already inferred from the concept referring to it, which correspond to his or her experiences. Here, al-Bannā established that the meaning of *daʿwa* depends on the Brother's interpretation, which takes form in the struggle, i.e. through action. In other words, the Brother will interpret *daʿwa* with reference to the practical outcomes he has already inferred. Consequently, if 'divine empowerment leading to Islamic government' is the aim of *daʿwa*, pragmatist hermeneutics implies that empowerment can be apprehended as coming about through power sharing and political compromise just as well as through al-Bannā's vision of a self-effacing elite leading the nation.

The above-mentioned acceptance of political parties would be one example of how the Muslim Brotherhood actually has reinterpreted 'Islamic order' in a new context. Further examples include how the organisation in the course of the 1990s developed a new concept of Islamic *state*, which al-Bannā had left undefined. By 2005 consensus had emerged around the concept 'civil Islamic state' (*dawla madaniyya islāmiyya*).[52] The context required the Muslim Brotherhood to distinguish its Islamic state at the domestic level from such contenders as Ǧamāʿa Islāmiyya and Islamic Ǧihād, and at the international level from the Islamic Republic of Irān. Growing popular support for multi-party democracy would also play an important part.[53]

In 2007, the Muslim Brotherhood publicly circulated a draft platform, which included a model for a state constitution in which Sharia as the frame of legislation would be complemented by a council of *ʿulamāʾ*, who would "advise the government's legislative and executive branches in matters of religious law", and who would be elected by the community of Muslim religious scholars. The platform also suggested that the council of *ʿulamāʾ* should have a say on a wide range of legislative and executive matters, and that the council's rulings would be absolute on matters deemed not subject to interpretation.[54] The traditional Islamic stance that excludes Christians and women from the highest offices was introduced as well.[55] The

[52] Ibid, p. 190.
[53] Harnisch and Mecham, 2009.
[54] Brown and Hamzawy, 2008, p. 4; Harnisch and Mecham, 2009; Pargeter, 2010, pp. 57–60.
[55] Brown and Hamzawy, 2008, p. 5.

draft received heavy criticism from the public as well as from progressive Brothers. The latter put forth an alternative draft that exchanged the council of *ʿulamāʾ* for a Supreme Constitutional Court, which may contain religious scholars but should not be limited to them, since 'the Muslim community' (*al-ʾumma*) is the source of political authority. This approach was grounded in a view of *Šarīʿa* as a 'frame of reference' (*marǧaʿiyya*) for legislation. The position was supported by, among others, Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī, and the Waṣatiyya-group.[56] The concept *marǧaʿiyya* derives from deliberations over how to maintain *Šarīʿa* while allowing interpretations in accordance with reason and need, and the development of new laws for matters which are outside of the scope of *Šarīʿa's* principles. It also implies rejecting the traditional concept of non-Muslims as *ahl al-ḏimma* ('subjects entitled to protection by the law') and opens up for Christians to participate in legislation since legislation is detached from *Šarīʿa* as practiced by religious scholars. Consequently, it would be the broadly constituted Constitutional Court, not a council of Islamic scholars that judges whether a law complies with *Šarīʿa* principles.[57] In fact, this new concept, while absent from al-Bannā's writings, is nevertheless in line with his argument in the creed mentioned above, that interpretations of the Qurʾān and Sunna are not limited to the traditional *fiqh* categories and principles.

The revolution of 25 January 2011 and the ousting of President Ḥusnī Mubārak enabled the Muslim Brotherhood to found the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) on 30 April 2011, led by Mūḥammad Morsī up to his victory in the presidential election in June 2012. The program reflects the progressive position within the Brotherhood.[58] The section 'Vision and Program' appears to reflect a 'Jamesian' pragmatist view, that material dimensions should be complemented by religion and 'the emotional life':[59]

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[56] Brown and Hamzawy, 2008, pp. 9, 14. Another supporter of the progressive position is Ibrahim al-Ḥudaybī, great grandson of Ḥassan al-Huḍaybī, al-Bannā's successor. According to Ibrāhīm al-Huḍaybī, models for an Islamic civil state can be sought in the USA or in the Scandinavian welfare states, rather than in an Islamic theocracy such as Iran; seminar in Cairo, 3 November 2010.

[57] Ibid, p. 3; Utvik, 2005, pp. 302–3. These changes within the Muslim Brotherhood at the national Egyptian level are connected also with developments at the global level of Islamic reform. As Utvik points out, there are similarities between the MB combination of *marǧa'iyya* with liberal democracy and the views of Iranian reformers like Abdolkarim Soroush and Mohsen Kadivar of the relationship between religion and politics; ibid, p. 303. Concerning al-Qaradāwī, he also founded the ecumenical International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) which includes Sunnīs and Šīʿites, and which (among other things) calls for democratic government and equal legislative rights for men and women; Gräf, 2005.

[58] al-Anani, 2011.

[59] Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) Platform, 2011.

> When the people develop their programs for reform they concern themselves with material issues and external matters of organizational, administrative and legislative nature, which are absolutely necessary and incumbent for reform and progress. Yet, without detracting from the previously mentioned matters, there are other matters which are essential to the FJP, and which concern thought, faith, spirituality, ethics and the emotional life. These are the matters that shape the essence of the human being and his loftiest characteristics, for man does not live of bread alone but needs both the spiritual and the material for his completeness. Thus we find that reform of the internal life (*al-bāṭin*) is of no less importance than reform of the external (*al-ẓāhir*), and this is an eternal truth that has been established by the Qurʾān, *Sūrat al-raʿd*, verse 11: 'God will never change a people's circumstances unless they change what is in themselves'. […] Through these two dimensions – the material and the spiritual – the individual and society will be able to soar towards the horizons of the rising sun of the future, God willing.

The program mentions nothing of the 2007 provision that barred Copts and women from the highest political office, nor a council of *ʿulamāʾ*. It also emphasizes that any citizen of whatever creed can join the party.[60] The section describing 'The Civil State' reads:

> The Islamic state is by its nature a civil state (*dawla madaniyya*). It is not a military state ruled by an army that seizes power through coups, nor is it a dictatorship. Equally, it is not a religious state (theocracy) ruled by the class of religious clerics – as indeed Islam does not have clerics, only specialized scholars of religion – so that no one can rule in the name of divine truth and no individuals can claim infallibility in order to monopolize interpretation of the Qurʾān and legislation for the community (*al-'umma*) and impose absolute obedience for themselves on the grounds of self-acclaimed holiness. Instead the rulers of the Islamic state are citizens who have been elected by popular mandate (*wafqaʾl-irāda al-šaʿbiyya*), for the Muslim community (*al-ʾumma*) is the source of power and governing posts are assigned according to competence, experience and reliability. Just as the Muslim community (*al-ʾumma*) has the right to elect its rulers and representatives, it has the right to hold them responsible and depose them.

[60] Ibid, p. 4.

> The fundamental difference between the Islamic state and other states is that it has as its frame of reference (*marğaʿiyya*) the Islamic *Šarīʿa*, derived from the creed of the vast majority of the Egyptian people. It is in the nature of *Šarīʿa* to organize, in addition to worship and ethics, the various other aspects of life for the Muslims. However, it organizes these aspects in the manner of general principles, leaving the details to interpretation (*al-iğtihād*) and legislation (*al-tašrīʿ*) in accordance with the time and place, and in view of truth, justice and the common good (*al-maṣlaḥa*). This is the duty of the legislative bodies (*al-mağālis al-tašrīʿiyya*), while the Supreme Constitutional Court is the guardian of their legislation. It should be taken into consideration that non-Muslims have the right to be judged according to their own legislation in matters of family and personal status law.
>
> In addition, the state is responsible for protecting freedom of belief and worship and the houses of worship for non-Muslims, with the same zeal as it protects Islām, its affairs and its mosques.[61]

We now know that when Morsī was president, he did not achieve any viable cooperation with the secular parties. The task of developing a new constitution was a breaking point. Morsī eventually rushed through a version, which secured a majority consisting of only 15 per cent of the vote, and which reverted to the conservative 2007 platform by introducing al-Azhar as the council of *ʿulamāʾ* that should be consulted in legislation; and he inscribed in the constitution the military's exemption from civil rule over its budget.[62] Kandīl explains this political behaviour as due to the most powerful Muslim Brothers having retained at heart al-Bannā's belief that God would eventually empower the Brothers, and that sharing that divine power with secular parties was by definition sinful.[63] Marina Ottaway explains the same outcome in political terms, pointing to the secular judiciary's arbitrary tactics to limit Islamist power. The old Supreme Court dissolved the Islamist-dominated parliament in June 2012 upon Morsī's election to president, a move that entrenched distrust between 'seculars' (old elites) and 'Islamists' and escalated conflict between Morsi and the secular parties. The secular parties and leaders contributed to the rift, Ottaway argues, by opposing everything coming from the president, and not least by failing to unite among themselves and thus putting up a solid counter-block to Morsī. As it were, the fragmented secular opposition gave Morsī and the Islamists both little choice and little democratic resistance. The move of introducing a council of *ʾulamāʾ*

[61] Ibid, p. 11.
[62] Ottaway, 2013.
[63] Kandil, 2015, pp. 139–45.

thus appears as much as an attempt to counter-balance a hostile Supreme Court as an attempt to Islamize the legislature. While Ottaway wrote this analysis before July 2013, she predicted that if the 'seculars' took their opposition to the streets the army would inevitably step in and restore the old order.[64]

Conclusion

Both Kandīl's and Ottaway's perspectives shed light on the political developments leading up to July 2013. Yet, as I have argued here, al-Bannā's hermeneutic and methodology is less deterministic than Kandīl argues. The indications that the Muslim Brothers have interpreted al-Banna's vision in a democratic direction from the 1990s onwards suggest that his methodology (*minhāǧ*) has been applied in a pragmatist way as a sign of 'Islamic order' whose interpretant is the state of mind of the Brothers. This state of mind is constant regarding the self-sacrificing ethos but changes regarding political forms, from 'national representative bodies' to 'multi-party democracy'. Even if it were the case that Morsī sought a wholesale return to al-Bannā's vision of the sign 'Islamic order', this would have been Morsī's decision, not a necessary outcome of al-Bannā's program. I would argue instead, that al-Bannā's *minhāǧ* (methodology) enables new apprehensions of the key concepts attached to 'Islamic order'. Consequently, and in contrast with Kandīl, I see no ideological need for the Muslim Brotherhood to abandon al-Bannā's program in order to collaborate and govern with secular parties. Theoretically, if the Brother's interpretant is 'exclusivity', al-Bannā's definition of *da'wa* (above, pp. 11–12) could be apprehended as meaning that the pious Muslims must lead for the sake of the common good and progress; but if the interpretant is 'inclusivity' the outcome could be power sharing for the sake of the common good and progress. However, much more research, including textual studies, interviews and comparative hermeneutics (within and beyond the Islamic disciplines), is required in order to test the present hypothesis of the Muslim Brotherhood as the embodiment of pragmatism.

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[64] Ottaway, 2013.

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Transcending Institutionalized Islām, Approaching Diversity: ʿAbdelmağīd Šarfī's Conception of a Qurʾānic Ethics of Liberation

Tina Dransfeldt

Abstract

This article engages with the intellectual enterprise of Tunisian Professor Emeritus in Arab Civilization and Islamic Thought, ʿAbdelmağīd Šarfī. Šarfī is one among many Arab intellectuals who have engaged in a critical reading of the Qurʾān and the Islamic tradition in order to challenge the traditional Islamic disciplines and methodologies. Through his reading of the prophetic message as discourse rather than text, his interpretation of 'the seal of the prophets', and his conception of a Qurʾānic ethics of liberation, this article intend to discuss the difference between an engaged historical criticism, such as Šarfī's, and the common conception of reformist Islām.

When reformist Islamic thought (*al-fikr al-iṣlāḥī*) is the subject of research in the West, the difference between the former and academic research, carried out by scholars with Muslim background, is often confused. Contemporary scholars from the Muslim world who work within the field of Islamic Studies are often labeled 'reformists' if the subject of their research is the relationship between the Islamic tradition (*turāṯ*) and modernity.[1] The Algerian professor in Islamic Studies, Muḥammad Arkoun (1928-2010), has addressed this issue on several occasions as he himself has often been labeled a representative of modern reformist Islām, despite his efforts to deconstruct the mythological and ideological nature of what he calls the 'Islamic

[1] Rather than merely reading their works in the context of recent intellectual developments in the Muslim world, Carool Kersten argues in a similar vein, in *Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islām* (2011), that there is a huge potential in studying the methodological, epistemological and philosophical underpinnings of their work, which, according to him, "can actually contribute to redefining a field of scholarly inquiry where the rules of engagement are still predominantly determined by Western academe." (Kersten 2011: 6). Examples of valuable studies, which, however, focus primarily on the social and political implications of their work (i.e. their reformist potential) rather than engaging in a dialogue with them about the epistemological and methodological premises of Islamic Studies, are: Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism: A Critique of Development Ideologies* (1988), Robert Lee, *Overcoming Tradition and Modernity: The Search for Islamic Authenticity* (1997), and Ibrahīm M. Abu-Rabīʿ, *Contemporary Arab Thought, Studies in post-1967 Arab Intellectual History* (2003), to mention but a few.

reason' (*al-ʿaql al-islāmī*):

> Far from suggesting that there is such a thing as a generically 'Islamic' reason, let alone advocating its claims, the treatise [*Towards a critique of Islamic Reason*] was intended to show how such a mythical construct could arise, and to demonstrate the advantages of probing it by means of the critical tools of modern linguistic, anthropological and historical scholarship. It was dismaying to find, therefore, scholars such as Leonard Binder or (to a lesser degree) Robert Lee or Olivier Carré and others who have commented on my work, evidently failing to grasp the radicalism of my intent, took my work as a species of modern, reformist (*islāḥī*) Islām; whereas, in my whole approach, Islamic 'reform' of the familiar type, represents precisely the kind of mythologising and ideologising that I am concerned to lay bare and to help overcome. (Arkoun 2006: 10f.)

Rather than advocating a reform of 'Islamic reason', Arkoun proposes that Islām, both in its historical and its contemporary manifestations, is studied by means of a historical epistemology. Contrary to the descriptive and narrative presentations of classical historiography, the objective of the progressive-regressive method of Arkoun's historical epistemology is to identify the ideological and mythological nature of so-called 'Islamic reason' and so-called 'Western reason' (cf. for instance Arkoun 2005: chapter 3, or Arkoun 2006: 16f., 219f.). The regressive process, on the one hand, is a process of looking back at the past, not to find a sacred and mythic past which can help reactivate sacred, uncontaminated and universal 'values', but to deconstruct *turāṯ* and the canonized corpus of religious texts, which have been used – and are still being used – to maintain monolithic conceptions of Islām. That is, the regressive process is an archaeological cognitive project through which it is possible to identify the historical epistemologies, which prevailed in each given historical context without projecting back 'modern' criteria and value judgments. The objective of the progressive process, on the other hand, is to liberate contemporary Islamic thought from "obvious, heavily ideological, mythological manipulations of the dismantled collective memories in the present context of modernization and globalization." (ibid: 219). The aim of the progressive-regressive method is to uncover the past in order to construct the future:

> This critical inquiry is also designed to contribute to the programme of emerging reason, namely, providing our present thinking with a new dynamic, more relevant intellectual tools and flexible procedures that are constantly being revised, re-appropriated theoretical frameworks to reassess on more reliable basis, the articulation of authority and power. (ibid: 219f.)

Contrary to the Orientalist discourse, which insists on 'neutrality' in regard to the studied object (cf. for instance the quote by Roger Arnaldez below), Arkoun advocates an engaged historical enterprise with a progressive perspective. The Orientalist's alleged neutral and objective approach to *turāṯ* contributes, according to Arkoun, to the maintenance of the ideological and mythological construct 'Islām' which he seeks to subvert.

Thus, I would argue that there are two aspects of this engaged historical criticism, which are important here. Firstly, uncovering the past in order to construct the future forms an integral part of the poststructuralist epistemology that scholars, such as Arkoun, rely on. According to these scholars, meaning and knowledge is socially constructed, and it is imperative to them that this is acknowledged as they seek to challenge any essentialist conception of both Islām and the West. As such, they are engaged in an academic debate about the proper epistemological and methodological approach to the field of Islamic Studies. Secondly, the progressive perspective indirectly points to the fact that these scholars also operate as intellectuals who are engaged in the public debate, and whose insistence on the need to renew Islamic thought is dedicated to advocating human rights, individual liberty and democracy. In this respect their work could be understood as prescriptive in a way comparable to that of reformists and revivalists. However, contrary to the latter they do not claim to hold any one, true interpretation of Islām, they simply insist on absolute freedom to research their religious heritage.

Whereas many studies have been dedicated to the latter perspective,[2] this article addresses the former in its interconnection with the latter. In the following, I will discuss how this progressive-regressive method is reflected in the historical-critical work of the Tunisian Professor Emeritus of Arab Civilization and Islamic Thought, ʿAbdelmağīd Šarfī (b. 1942), who has also first and foremost been studied as a representative of 'reformist Islām'.[3] I will start with a clarification of the difference between the critically engaged enterprise of intellectuals, such as Arkoun and Šarfī, and the common conception of modern 'reformist' Islām. Then I will analyze the implications of Šarfī's discourse analysis of the prophetic message and the subsequent reception of the latter. I will conclude with a discussion of his conception of a Qurʾānic ethics and its relation to 'reformist Islām'.

Enlightened Muslim Thought

As both Orientalists and traditionalists have identified Islām with the

[2] Cf. note 1.
[3] Cf. for instance R. Benzine's chapter on ʿAbdelmağīd Šarfī in *Les nouveaux penseurs de l'Islām* (2004).

canonized tradition and argued that any 'objective' study of Islām must be in accordance with this tradition, it has become necessary for scholars in the field of Islamic Studies to argue for the compatibility of Islām and modern scientific methodology.[4] According to the French Orientalist Roger Arnaldez, for instance, modern theory of science is incompatible with the study of Islām:

> Qu'un Islamologue ait une réaction personelle devant l'Islām, c'est ce qu'on ne saurait lui interdire. Qu'il étudie des textes, cela est indispensable et ne saurait être trop recommandé en dépit de leur nombre et de leur volume imposants, ainsi que des difficultés de la langue arabe. Mais il doit se garder d'interpréter ces textes à sa manière, fût-ce au nom de ce qu'il considérerait comme une méthode scientifique. Par exemple, il pourrait être tenté de traduire un verset coranique en s'appuyant sur la linguistique la plus moderne, sur la philology sémitique la plus éprouvée, et la critique historique la plus exigeante; mais si, par ces procédés scientifiques, il donne à ce verset un sens qu'aucun commentateur musulman n'a reconnu, il ne fait pas œuvre d'Islamologue. (Arnaldez 2002: 7f.)
>
> (We cannot prohibit an Islamologist from having a personal relation to Islām. It is essential that he studies the texts, and this cannot be recommended enough despite their number and their impressive volume, as well as the difficulties in respect to the Arabic language. But he must resist from interpreting these texts in his own way, even if it is in the name of something he would consider a scientific method. He might, for example, be tempted to translate a Qurʾānic verse while relying on the most modern linguistics, the most proven Semitic philology and the most rigorous historical criticism; but if he, through these scientific methods, gives the verse a meaning which no Muslim commentator has recognized, it is not a work of an Islamologist.)

By claiming that the only legitimate manifestation of Islām is the canonized tradition, arguments like this do not only disqualify any critical study of the Qurʾān and the Islamic tradition, it places scholars in the field of Islamic Studies with Muslim background, who rely on a poststructuralist methodology in their research, in "a personal relation

[4] It is rather the rule than the exception that these scholars introduce their works with a discussion of the proper epistemological and methodological approach to the field of Islamic Studies in order to address those critics who have questioned the legitimacy of applying modern scientific methodology in the study of Islām, be it Western scholars, such as Roger Arnaldez, or the *ʿulamāʾ* who maintain that only the traditional Islamic disciplines should be applied in the interpretation of the Qurʾān and the Sunna. It is my contention that these reflections are often mistakenly read as an expression of 'reformism' rather than as an expression of academic positioning.

to Islām" deemed subjective or reformist rather than scientific. These scholars unquestionably do have "a personal relation to Islām". Disqualifying critical research, regardless of whether the research is being conducted by Muslims or non-Muslims, by claiming that the application of, for instance, historical criticism reveals a "personal relation to Islām" is problematic. One must ask: Is it even possible to have two antithetical approaches to a research field, such as the history of ideas – one for Western thought, where poststructuralist methodology is legitimate, and one for Arab-Islamic thought, where it is not?

In order to counter arguments like Arnaldez', scholars in the field of Islamic Studies have felt obligated to argue for the legitimacy of poststructuralist criticism in the study of Islām, and it is my contention that this should be acknowledged as part of an academic debate about the proper epistemological and methodological approach to the field of Islamic Studies, and not be confused with the reformist aspects of their intellectual enterprise. As Arkoun rightly argues, this is not an expression of an "Islamic 'reform' of the familiar type". I will define this 'reform' more precisely in the following.

Since the *nahḍa* period (19th to early 20th century), Modern Arab-Islamic thought has developed out of a confrontation and meeting with Europe as an intellectual capacity and a rising power.

From its beginning, modernity has been double-edged: it contained within it both creative, scientific, and exploitative dimensions. In addition to representing rationalism, discovery, and the systematization of disciplines, modernity represents encounter, domination, and exploitation. (Abu-Rabiʿ 2003: xv)

Because of this equivocal nature of modernity, the Arab intelligentsia has vacillated between fascination with and hostility towards the technological and scientific achievements of the West. Modern Arab-Islamic culture has been characterized by an ongoing conflict between authenticity (*aṣāla*) and modernity (*ḥadāṯa*), between returning to its roots (*uṣūl*) or accepting the cultural and scientific achievements of the West. Whereas the reformists of the 19th and early 20th century acknowledged the need to renew (*taǧdīd*) Islamic thought and the established disciplines, their approach to the relation between Islām and modernity was somewhat apologetic as they sought to defend Islām against Western and Orientalist claims that Muslim societies were incapable of adapting to modernity. The so-called 'founding fathers' of modern reformism – Ǧamāl al-Din al-Afġānī (1839-97) and Mūhammād ʿAbduh (1849-1905) – were therefore preoccupied with arguing for the compatibility of faith and reason in order to demonstrate that modern rationalism was the essence of 'true Islām'.

The representatives of the so-called second reform movement – or *les nouveaux penseurs de l'Islām* in the words of R. Benzine (2004) – have been more radical in their approach to Islām and modernity.

They constitute a new and very heterogeneous group of intellectuals who find it indispensable to renew the religious discourse through an exhaustive examination and critique of the Qurʾān and *turāṯ*. These scholars are determined to introduce a new Qurʾānic hermeneutics, which – with its emphasis on individual liberty in regard to the interpretation of the Qurʾān – constitutes a direct demand for a democratization of the Muslim societies. As such, their demand to study the Qurʾān and *turāṯ* according to modern academic standards and to read them as part of human history and not as sacred history have constituted a challenge to both the traditional religious institutions and the dictatorial regimes of their respective countries. Consequently, these scholars have been targets of the ruling powers and the *ʿulamāʾ*, both of whom regard them as a threat to their political and religious hegemony.[5] Because of their critical approach to the Qurʾān and *turāṯ*, these scholars have often been accused of being too influenced by contemporary Western thought. However, though their thinking is characterized by incredulity towards the grand narratives of 'Islām', the modern/postmodern implications of their methodology do not indicate that they directly identify themselves with Western modernism/postmodernism. Their thinking represents an acknowledgement of the methodological and epistemological achievements of Western philosophy as well as a critique of its alleged universality. Operating from the margins of both Western and Islamic academic traditions, they occupy what Homi K. Bhabha has called the 'Third Space' (Bhabha 1994). If we acknowledge the liminal hybridity of their works, it becomes clear that they are more than mere representatives of 'reformist Islām'; the epistemological and methodological underpinnings of their work reveal a critical perspective on Western academia as well.

Thus, on the one hand, there is a qualitative difference between the first and the second reform movement, between a somewhat apologetic approach to the relationship between Islām and modernity, and the critical enterprise of scholars such as ʿAbdelmağīd Šarfī and Muḥammad Arkoun. On the other hand, however, it is my contention that there is a qualitative difference between at least to 'branches' within the so-called second reform movement; between scholars such as Fazlūr Raḥmān (Pakistan), M. Muḥammad Ṭāha (Sudān) and

[5] Examples are the Sudanese intellectual M. Muḥammad Ṭāha (1909-85) and the Egyptian professor in Islamic Studies Naṣr Ḥ. Abū Zayd (1943-2010). Ṭāha was – in accordance with the regulations of the newly implemented *Šarīʿa* law, which he and his followers insisted was repealed – executed in January 1985 after being declared guilty of apostasy, sedition, undermining the constitution, inciting unlawful opposition to the government, disturbing public tranquility, and membership in an unlawful organization. Naṣr Ḥ. Abū Zayd, on the other hand, was in 1995 declared guilty of apostasy and consequently declared divorced from his wife because of his academic works on Qurʾānic hermeneutics. He was subsequently forced into exile as he was in danger of being assassinated.

Muḥammad Ṭalbī (Tunisia), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, scholars such as Abdolkarīm Sorouš (Irān), ʿAbdullāhī An-Naʿīm (Sudān), Naṣr Ḥ. Abū Zayd (Egypt), Muḥammad Arkoun (Algeria), Muḥammad ʿĀbed al-Ğābirī (Morocco), and ʿAbdelmağīd Šarfī (Tunisia). The main reason for grouping these intellectuals into two distinct groups even though they all advocate a hermeneutical approach to the Qurʾān, is that while the first group maintains that the essence of Islām is ethical, and that it is both necessary and possible to distinguish between the historical and the universal aspects of the Qurʾān, the second group rejects the very possibility of this distinction. According to the second group, Islām is plural both in 'essence' and in time.

Thus, what is often defined, as 'reformist' Islām is, in fact, a very heterogeneous group of intellectuals spanning from reformists who ascribe an ahistorical essence to Islām, which is compatible with modernity, to proponents of historical criticism. Along the same line as Filālī-Anṣarī, I would, thus, rather characterize the 'second reform movement' as 'enlightened Muslim thought' than reformist (Filali-Ansary 2003). These scholars study the Qurʾān and the manifestations of Islām throughout history by means of modern scientific methodology. By simply labeling them 'reformist' one risks reducing their work to an object of research – 'the Islamic reformist phenomenon' – rather than acknowledging their contributions to the field of research in Islām and entering into a dialogue with them about the proper academic approach to Islām, both in the Muslim world and in the West.[6] As the Egyptian professor in Islamic Studies, Naṣr Ḥ. Abū Zayd (1943-2010), has argued, the most important is to gain absolute freedom to pursue critical research within the field of Islamic Studies:

> Nous avons besoin de faire librement des recherches dans notre héritage religieux. C'est la condition première du renouveau. Nous devons lever l'embargo sur la pensée libre. La champ du renouveau devrait être illimité. (Cited in Benzine 2004: 24)
>
> (We need to be free to research our religious heritage. This is the first condition of renewal. We must lift the ban on free thought. The field of renewal should be unlimited.)

ʿAbdelmağīd Šarfī

ʿAbdelmağīd Šarfī has been Professor of Arab Civilization and Islamic Thought, first at the École Normale Superior in Tunis and

[6] Carool Kersten has made a similar point in his study of Nurcholish Madjid, Hasan Hanafi and Muḥammad Arkoun in *Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islām* (2011).

then at the University of Manouba (1969-2002). From 1983-86 he was Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Tunis. He is a sought-after speaker and has been visiting professor at several European universities (including Berlin, Paris IV, Lyon II, Rome, and Geneva). He has served as a member of the Council of the Arab Foundation for Modern Thought (2003-2005) and held the Chair of Comparative Religions at UNESCO (1999-2003). He is currently the Director of the collection *Maʿālim al-ḥadāṯa* (Sud Éditions, Tunis) and is a member of the editorial board of several journals including *IBLA* (Tunis), *Revue Arabe des Droits de l'Homme* (Tunis), *Islāmochristiana* (Rome), and *Prologues, Etudes Maghrébines* (Casablanca).

Šarfī is the author of numerous internationally acclaimed works including: *Al-islām wa-l-ḥadāṯa* ("Islām and Modernity"), Tunis 1990; *Al-islām wāḥidan wa mutaʿaddidan* ("Islām is one and multiple"), Beirut, 2006-2007; and *Al-islām bayn-'l-risāla wa-l-tārīḫ* ("Islām Between Message and History"), Beirut, 2001. The vast majority of his publications is in Arabic and addresses an Arab-Muslim educated public. Despite the fact that many friends and colleagues have encouraged him to write in a European language in order to reach the international academia and the majority of Muslims who live in Asia, Europe and The United States and who do not master the Arabic language, Šarfī has chosen to write in Arabic. He insists that Arabic is a living language which can be used to express modern thought, and that it is necessary to convey research in Arabic in order to prevent the Arab public from being alienated from modern science. With this in mind, he has mentored an entire generation of young Tunisian scholars and equipped them with the tools of modern critique.

The Prophetic Message

Similar to his conception of Arabic as a living language, ʿAbdelmağīd Šarfī maintains that the Qurʾānic message is not a dead artifact belonging to a museum. On the contrary, Islām is a living religion that addresses the believers in their current situation.

> Notre désir de suivre la méthodologie moderne est dû au fait que l'Islām n'est point une religion morte qu'on étudierait comme une pièce de musée. Non, il est une religion vivante que des générations d'anciens ont comprise et pratiquée dans le cadre de conditions historiques et scientifiques déterminées. Ses fidèles d'aujourd'hui se sentent directement concernés par son message, ils attendent d'elle qu'elle réponde à leurs propres interrogations et non pas à celles de leurs pères et de leurs ancêtres, qu'elle leur propose des solutions qui emportent leur adhésion et leur

> engagement, en dehors de toute pression ou contrainte. (Šarfī 2004: 18f.)
>
> (I wish to follow modern methodology because Islām is not a dead religion, which can be studied like a museum piece. No, it is a living religion, which earlier generations have understood and practiced in the context of specific historical and scientific conditions. Its followers today feel directly affected by its message; they expect it to answer their own questions and not those of their fathers and their ancestors, to present solutions which they can support and commit to, without pressure or coercion.)

While I am aware that this point has been made by many scholars within the field of Islamic Studies, Šarfī's argumentation is important because he uses the fact that the Qurʾān is a source of continuous inspiration to Muslims to argue for the legitimacy of modern methodology in the study of Islām in contradistinction to Orientalists, such as Arnaldez, and the *ʿulamāʾ* who cling to the traditional Islamic disciplines.

Šarfī's conception of the revealed message is, in this context, similar to the Iranian intellectual ʿAbdolkarīm Sorouš's (b. 1945) theory of contraction and expansion, which emphasizes the fundamental difference between religion and religiosity (Soroush 2000). Whereas religion remains the same, religiosity (i.e. the interpretations of religion) will constantly change. According to Sorouš, revelation repeats itself every time the Qurʾān is read, and consequently places every reader in the same position as Muḥammad. There is a dialectical relation between text and reader. Depending on the existential situation of the reader and the questions, which this situation provokes, the text is understood differently. 'Islām' is not and has never been a uniform entity. Despite the fact that the notion 'Islām' is applied to refer to specific elements which unite the believers and distinguish them from other religious communities and from non-believers, 'Islām' is neither unique in time, place nor in 'essence'. No person can claim that his or her interpretation of 'Islām' is the only correct interpretation as it is a historical fact that the notion 'Islām' has been accommodated to both diverse and contradictory situations throughout its long history (Charfi 2004: 19).

The 'Absolute' as a Historical Phenomenon

If the hermeneutical relation between text and reader is acknowledged, it becomes necessary to re-examine the nature and functions of those components, which are perceived as the foundation of 'Islām', according to Šarfī. Whereas the institutionalized

understanding of *turāṯ* has given a specific interpretation of the prophetic message precedence over all other interpretations by declaring the former identical with the interpreted text, Šarfī argues that any number of interpretations is possible, as it is impossible to find two identical relations between text and reader.

However, whereas Šarfī argues for a hermeneutical approach to the Qurʾān when it comes to the believers' relation to the revealed text, his historical research is rather social constructivist. According to Šarfī, humans have searched for the meaning of their existence throughout history; they have sought to know their origin and destiny and to establish order both within nature and society in order to suppress the chaos of the universe. Man cannot live in a world without order, and he has therefore produced explanations to protect himself against the arbitrary, according to Šarfī. Humans have, for instance, distinguished themselves from animals by introducing culture, which encompasses material as well as moral and ethical developments. In the course of time, culture has obtained autonomy from its human creators, and, oblivious of what they have created and developed, humans have in turn subjected themselves spontaneously to this culture (ibid. 24). Cultures and societies are built upon specific sets of social norms and regulations constructed by man. These norms and regulations exist within all cultures, and their purpose is to distinguish what is permitted from what is prohibited. If this process of socialization succeeds, the norms and regulations become self-evident and illegal to transgress. Moreover, by embracing these rules as if they were autonomous, the individual and the group accept them as *faits accomplis* neither to be questioned nor subverted. Thus, humans have transcendentalized and sacralized what is in reality a product of their own thinking. According to Šarfī, truth is a human construction which needs to be desacralized and reinstated in its proper historical context.

Similar to Muḥammad Arkoun who, by means of his concept 'the imaginary' (*l'imaginaire*), seeks to determine those concealed mechanisms which transform ordinary events, through symbolic images, into a collective representation which structure our perception of the world (Arkoun 2005: introduction), Šarfī seeks to emphasize that it is the lack of consciousness of this process of transformation which impedes the process of human liberation in the Muslim world. To both Arkoun and Šarfī humans are first and foremost interpreting creatures, which cannot escape their own need to produce images about themselves and others in order to understand themselves and the surrounding world. Historically, religion has played a decisive role in justifying the rules and norms of society, and thus the *idées reçues* of *turāṯ* must be subjected to a historical-critical study that takes into account the socio-cultural setting in which these ideas emerged (ibid. part 1, chapter 4). According to Šarfī, it is impossible to distinguish between the historical and the universal aspects of the Qurʾān. The

term 'prescription' is a term belonging to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and it is the *fuqahāʾ* (the jurists) who have separated the 'prescriptive' verses of the Qurʾān from their historical context and from the Qurʾān as a whole in order to deduce a divine law (ibid. 68f.). Despite the fact that the Qurʾān reflects the political, social, cultural and economic context in which the prophet lived, the *fuqahāʾ* have read the Qurʾān literally as if the latter was trans-historical. Šarfī, by contrast, maintains that the believers, instead of imitating the letter of the Qurʾān, should be obliged to critically reflect upon its content.

In addition to this, Šarfī is preoccupied with a critical rereading of the foundation of 'the pillars of Islām' (ibid. 69-74). The intention is not to attack the religious feelings of Muslims, but to address the fact that many Muslims find these rituals outdated. Because the conditions of life have undergone enormous changes since these rituals were codified, many contemporary Muslims find it difficult to live in accordance with them. The question at stake is once again whether Muslims are obliged to follow the practice of their ancestors or free to live as Muslims in accordance with their own convictions (ibid. 73).

According to Šarfī, the ritual regulations in regard to prayer (*ṣalāt*), charity (*zakāt*), fast (*ṣawm*), and pilgrimage (*ḥağğ*) are as determined by the historical circumstances as the legal regulations (*aḥkām fiqhiyya*). If we take a look at *ṣalāt,* for instance, the Qurʾān avoids determining the exact number of prayers, the intention, the state of purity, the ablution, the invocation of *Allāhū Akbar* (God is great) to mention but a few of the ritual prescriptions concerning *ṣalāt* (ibid. 69f.). Moreover, the codification of the number of prayers is based on a *ḥadīṯ*, which describes Muḥammad's night journey and his bargaining with God concerning the number of ritual prayers (Saḥīḥ Buḫārī 9:93:608). But as this narrative is based on a mythical mentality, it cannot be given any validity, according to Šarfī. Finally, if the fixation of the time of the prayers in accordance with the hours of the sun, as mentioned in the Qurʾān, is absolute, then the prophetic message does not concern inhabitants of the polar regions in the same manner as it concerns inhabitants of the regions where the length of the day is more or less the same all year.

Šarfī's critical re-reading of the foundations of 'the pillars of Islām' clearly illustrates the difference between the two branches of 'enlightened Muslim thought', as I have described above. Contrary to Šarfī, Fazlūr Raḥmān (1919-1988), for instance, maintained that the number of daily prayers was indisputable.

> The *five* daily prayers are not all mentioned in the Qurʾān, but must be taken to represent the later usage of the Prophet himself, since it would be historically impossible to support the view that the Muslims themselves added two new prayers to the three mentioned in the Qurʾān. (Rahman 1966: 36, cf. 36f. on *ṣawm*,

zakāt, as well as *ḥağ*).

Thus, whereas scholars such as Šarfī question the very 'essence' of Islām, Fazlūr Raḥmān maintains that Islām has an indisputable essence; but he insists at the same time that the latter must be understood and interpreted in its proper historical context.

The purpose of Šarfī's enterprise is not to abolish 'the pillars of Islām', but to emphasize that the regulations prescribed by the *fuqahāʾ* during the formative period of Islām are not absolute. This does not imply that it is wrong to live in accordance with these regulations, merely that there are other means by which to fulfill the religious obligations as a Muslim (Charfi 2004: 71). The believers should, according to Šarfī, be free to regulate the means by which to worship God in accordance with their convictions and worldview.

The Qurʾān as Oral and Written

In his definition of the prophetic message Šarfī's point of departure is Muḥammad ʿAbduh's interpretation of revelation in *Risālat al-Tawḥīd* (*The Theology of Unity*, 1897). According to Šarfī, ʿAbduh understands revelation as the knowledge which man finds within himself being confident that this knowledge is of divine origin (Charfi 2004: 39). If we accept this conception of revelation, the divine choice of Muḥammad as a messenger does not exclude his human predispositions, which then, according to Šarfī, necessarily implies that psychological, cultural and social factors have influenced the prophet's knowledge (ibid.). Contrary to the traditionalists who vacillate between an exaltation of the exemplary qualities of the prophet Muḥammad and an affirmation that he has received the revelation because of divine choice alone, Šarfī maintains that the one does not exclude the other. Following the intellectual enterprise of Fazlūr Raḥmān, Šarfī maintains that the Qurʾān at once is the Word of God and the word of Muḥammad.

> But orthodoxy (indeed, all medieval thought) lacked the necessary intellectual tools to combine in its formulation of the dogma the otherness and verbal character of the Revelation on the one hand, and its intimate connection with the work and the religious personality of the Prophet on the other, i.e. it lacked the intellectual capacity to say both that the Qurʾān is entirely the Word of God and, in an ordinary sense, also entirely the word of Muhammed. (Rahman 1966: 31)

According to Šarfī, the Qurʾān is the word of God insofar as God is the source, and a human word insofar as it belongs to a particular language, is in conformity with the lexicon and grammar of this

language, and adjusts to the specific cultural categories of the speaker and his environment (Charfi 2004: 41). In opposition to the Sunnite doctrine of Muḥammad's illiteracy (*ummiyya*) which deprives Muḥammad of both his free will and his faculties in order to safeguard the divine nature of the prophetic message, Šarfī maintains that the divine and transcendent nature of the Qurʾān can be maintained at the same time as the historical, and consequently relative, character of the latter is emphasized (ibid. 42f.). God has addressed man in a language understood by the latter; otherwise the revealed message would be useless. Moreover, in transmitting the revealed message to his contemporaries the prophet was compelled to use what was at his disposal, and what his contemporaries knew, as well (ibid. 45).

In a similar vein to Arkoun's distinction between the prophetic discourse and the 'Closed Official Corpus' (Arkoun 2006: chapter 1), Šarfī distinguishes between the Qurʾān as an oral message and a written text (Charfi 2004: part 1, chapter 3). There is a qualitative difference between the oral nature of the prophetic discourse and the written codified text.

According to Šarfī, the process of codification has had both positive and negative consequences. Firstly, the political decision of the third Caliph ʿUṯmān (644-656) to codify the received message in order to bring about unity and to establish absolute power over the state by making the ruling power the sole custodian of revelation is decisive. This decision resulted in a destruction of all non-official collections of the prophetic message, and consequently it has been of great significance for the construction of *turāṯ*. However, as lamentable as this irreversible process, which has eliminated a large part of the oral prophetic discourse from *turāṯ*, might be, it probably prevented the Muslim community from being permeated with religious schisms far worse than the schism between the Sunnites, the Šīʿites and the Ḫāriğites after the death of ʿUṯmān (d. 656), according to Šarfī (ibid. 56). Secondly, the process of codification neither preserved the circumstances nor the intonations of the Qurʾānic sūras. Whereas the contemporaries of the prophet Muḥammad were not interested in codifying the circumstances of revelation, which they experienced directly, the subsequent generations were. The circumstances of revelation were not codified until two or three generations after Muḥammad. Moreover, the intonation of the oral revelation is absent from the written Qurʾān. Contentment, anger, exhortation, reprimand, etc. is something the written word cannot express in the same manner as the intonation of the spoken word. These factors have had the consequence that the written text in opposition to the oral discourse gives rise to a variety of interpretations and, at times, even contradictory interpretations (ibid. 54f.). The conflicting interpretations in turn resulted in a definition of competing orthodoxies, each with the aim of monopolizing the

authentic interpretation of the text.

Similar to Naṣr Ḥ. Abū Zayd, Šarfī defines the Qurʾān primarily as an oral discourse and only secondarily as a written text. The difference between understanding the Qurʾān as discourse and as text is, however, not purely a difference between the oral and the written. Contrary to a hermeneutical approach to the Qurʾān, discourse analysis is preoccupied with the relation between language, power and truth. That is, the Qurʾān is not only a text to be read and analyzed; it is both a product of an original oral discourse and an orally recited discourse, which shapes the lives of the believers. Whereas the production of the written text was the first step towards institutionalization and orthodoxy, understanding the Qurʾān as an oral discourse emphasizes that the Qurʾān is a living phenomenon, which, both past and present, is the outcome of dialogue, debates, disputes, acceptance and rejection. Abū Zayd's interpretation of the horizontal dimension of the Qurʾān in *Rethinking the Qurʾān: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics* (2004) is a perfect example of this. If the horizontal dimension of the Qurʾān is to be acknowledged, it is necessary to understand the Qurʾān as discourse rather than text, according to Abū Zayd. Whereas the Qurʾān understood as text reduces the former to a corpus open to ideological manipulation, the Qurʾān understood as discourse emphasizes the status of the recited Qurʾān in shaping the public consciousness (Abu Zayd 2004: 10). According to Abū Zayd, applying modern hermeneutics in relation to the Qurʾān – as rewarding as it might be – disregards the diverse cultures and convictions of the masses and has led both traditionalists and reformists to produce authoritative hermeneutics. Contrary to the interpretation of the Qurʾānic text by the elite, which is often affected by power manipulations, the living status of the Qurʾān as discourse enhances a democratically open hermeneutics.

Muḥammad as 'the Seal of the Prophets'

According to the Qurʾān (33:40), Muḥammad is the last prophet, and his message seals the prophetic traditions. Consequently, the decisive question is whether this sealing signifies a deadlock or emancipation. Does the sealing indicate a fixation of a set of untouchable rules and regulations, or does it liberate humankind from all sorts of fixation in order to introduce a new space within which man has to take responsibility for his actions? To illustrate these two possible interpretations of 'the seal of the prophets', Šarfī applies the picture of locking the door of one's house either from the inside or the outside (Charfi 2004: part 1, chapter 5). If the door is locked from the inside, as the sealing traditionally is understood, then man is imprisoned in a definitive fixation of those concepts and prescriptions which have been revealed through the last prophetic message. The possibility of

evolution, progress and innovation is dismissed. God's command can, then, only be observed if the Qurʾān is read literally and as an ahistorical message.

If the door, on the other hand, is locked from the outside, the sealing indicates a closure in regard to the human need to seek aid from and comfort in fixed norms and regulations.

> En ce sens, le fait de sceller pose une limite à la nécessité pour l'homme d'appuyer sa connaissance sur une source et sa conduite sur une norme extérieure. Il annonce à toute l'humanité l'inauguration d'une ère nouvelle, d'une nouvelle étape de l'histoire où l'homme, ayant atteint la maturité, n'aura plus besion d'un guide ou d'un tuteur pour les moindres details de son existence. (Ibid. 100)
>
> (In this sense, the act of sealing sets a limit to the need for man to base his knowledge on a source and his acts on an external norm. It announces to all humanity the inauguration of a new era, a new stage in history, where man, having reached maturity, no longer needs a guide or tutor to every detail in his life.)

Indeed, if the sealing is understood in this way, the mission of Muḥammad as the last prophet is to guide man towards his new responsibility. If the door to 'the house of prophecies' is locked from the outside, man is free to meet the challenges of the world. The objective of the seal is then to liberate man, not to imprison him by forcing him to imitate the example of the prophet as the traditionalists claim. Liberation is at the core of the prophetic message, and true liberation can only be obtained if the *idées reçues* are constantly questioned. As such, the sealing constitutes an opening towards a vast number of horizons within which man is free to organize his existence and responsible for his acts (ibid. 103).

Institutionalization

If it is possible to interpret 'the seal of the prophets' as an act of emancipation, a question comes to mind: Why has this interpretation not determined the reception of the prophetic message throughout history? One of the primary factors regarding Islām, according to Šarfī, is that diversity at the time of Muḥammad and the subsequent generations was conceived as everything but fruitful (ibid. 134). Supported by this mistrust of diversity the process of institutionalization had favorable conditions. However, the institutionalization of Islām is not a unique phenomenon. Institutionalization is an inescapable process for all movements – whether religious or non-religious – as the need to create order

through rules and regulations is a *conditio sine qua non* for man. As such, the objective of Šarfī's critique of 'institutionalized Islām' equals Arkoun's critique of 'orthodox Islām'. The process of institutionalization has diverted the original form of the prophetic message – an oral discourse which is both shaped by and continuously shaping dialogue, debate, and dispute – and as such it has created vast areas of the unthought and the unthinkable, to use the terminology of Arkoun (Arkoun 2006: introduction).

The purpose of institutionalization is to control the transformation from theory to practice, and as such the process of institutionalization takes place on multiple levels (Charfi 2004: part 2, chapter 2). Firstly, through confessionalism institutionalization constitutes a contributory factor in the distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. As Muslims represented a minority at the emergence of Islām, this is not surprising. Confessionalism was, among other things, a means by which to distinguish the new religion from the established religions and communities at the time. In order to ensure that existing religions and communities did not absorb the adherents of the new religion, doctrines, rites, prescriptions and prohibitions were introduced. Specific clothes, food and social conventions were means by which to make it easier to recognize one another.

Secondly, institutionalization constitutes a formalization of rituals (ibid. 133f.). The different forms of practice were transformed into uniform rituals eliminating personal initiative, and consequently the possibility of deviating from the established, sacralized and unchangeable principles. The original flexibility of the message was abolished in favor of an obligatory practice. Rituals, which at the time of prophet Muḥammad were changed, depending on the circumstances, became immutable in order to safeguard the unity of the community. In time, ritualism became a more and more mechanical practice at the expense of its initial signification and caused the believers to blindly submit to the external requirements without inner conviction.

Thirdly, and in continuation of the first two manifestations of institutionalization, the prophetic message was transformed into an institution, which continuously has formulated binding dogmas. This dogmatization of the Muslim faith was based on a literal reading of the Qurʾān with the objective of enumerating a number of truths, which Muslims were obliged to believe in. In order to maintain their position as representatives of the official religious institution, the dominating class gradually eliminated the possibility of free and contestatory thinking (ibid. 137).

These three procedures comprise a process of transcendentalization and sacralization, which all messages, religious as well as non-religious, must bear. But because Muslims have had difficulties liberating themselves from these sacralized norms and

regulations, they have been impeded from being the pioneers in regard to human rights etc. Similar to his compatriot, professor of private law, the former President of the Tunisian League for Human Rights, and former Minister of Education, Muḥammad Šarfī, ʿAbdelmağīd Šarfī emphasizes that what initially constituted progress and a step towards liberty and equality, has resulted in stagnation because the Šarīʿa law, though a human creation, has been absolutized and sacralized.

> Compared with earlier or contemporaneous bodies of law, Muslim law represented a general advance in human history with regard to the rights of non-Muslims, slaves and women, a considerable step towards liberty and equality and hence towards the foundations of human rights as we conceive them today. The sharia is a set of laws which appear unjust by the standards of today. But the ʿulamāʾ who drew them up were chained to the circumstances of their time. (Charfi 2005: 79)

A Qurʾānic Ethics

ʿAbdelmağīd Šarfī's focus on a Qurʾānic spirit of liberation has clear ethical implications. In this regard, his intellectual enterprise is somewhat similar to that of Fazlūr Raḥmān and M. Muḥammad Ṭāha who maintain that the essence of Islām is ethical. However, Šarfī's conception of a Qurʾānic ethics provides some basis for a non-essentialist view. In the remaining part of the paper, I will try to explain the difference between the two conceptions of a Qurʾānic ethics.

The essence of M. Muḥammad Ṭāha's intellectual enterprise is a distinction between the Meccan and the Medinese sūras. Whereas the prophetic message during the Mecca period was addressed to the whole of humanity, it was restricted to the contemporaries of the prophet during the Medina period, according to Ṭaha. In opposition to the *ʿulamāʾ,* Ṭaha concluded that if there is a contradiction between two verses in the Qurʾān, the Meccan verse should take precedence over the Medinese. Though Taha, according to both ʿAbdelmağīd Šarfī and Muḥammad Šarfī, was correct in his interpretation of the difference between the Meccan and the Medinese sūras, and in his emphasis on freedom and equality throughout his interpretation of the Qurʾān, his emphasis on the universal and eternal nature of the Meccan sūras is an expression of a modern essentialism which risk solving one problem while creating another.

Furthermore, the theory of hermeneutics and the idea of a distinction between the eternal and the specific verses share the drawback that they risk solving one problem while creating another in its stead. It is true that Taha tends to be more explicative and Talbi

more normative. But both writers argue for one religious body of law to be replaced with another religious body of law. This is an important drawback of their writing. (Ibid. 97f.)

Both ʿAbdelmaǧīd Šarfī and Muḥammad Šarfī maintain, in a way comparable to that of Arkoun, that the distinction between the eternal and the specific, as seen in the writings of several Muslim modernists, is an expression of an 'ahistorical' reading of the Qurʾān.

Abdelmajid Šarfī's social constructivist reading of the Qurʾān and the Islamic tradition constitutes a 'postmodern' perspective on the deficiencies of modern Muslim intellectuals' methodology. In this respect, his intellectual enterprise has several features in common with the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor's critique of modernity (1992). Similar to Taylor's diagnosis of the malaise of modernity where a common ethics and a common horizon of meaning have been replaced by individualism and the precedence of instrumental reason, Šarfī points towards the fact that behind absolute freedom lies hidden the constant possibility of an immoral world.

> Toutefois, derrière cette liberté absolue, se cache la possibilité d'un monde amoral, guide uniquement par l'intérêt immediate; c'est là une conséquence qu'il ne faut pas fuir ni masquer par quelque subterfuge.
> Ici intervient le role de l'ethique coranique qui, comme la liberté et avec elle, est un horizon indépassable. Le croyant n'est pas guide par une lumière qui transcenderait l'histoire: il chemine dans une lumière qui remplit l'univers et qui donne le moyens de réfléchir sur l'existence et sur le monde. (Šarfī 2004: 216)

(However, behind this absolute freedom, lies the possibility of an amoral world, only guided by immediate interest, hidden; this is a consequence which we should not flee or disguise by any subterfuge.
Here the role of the Qurʾānic ethics intervenes, which, like freedom and with it, is an unsurpassable horizon. The believer is not guided by a light which transcends history: he walks in a light which fills the universe and which provides him with the means to reflect on life and the world.)

As the Qurʾānic ethics, like liberty, constitutes an inexceedable horizon for Muslims, absolute liberty does not endanger morality, according to Šarfī. However, Šarfī's emphasis on a Qurʾānic ethics does not indicate that he promotes a return to a traditional understanding of religion or a religious justification of the solidarity between individuals. Similar to Charles Taylor who substitutes traditional relations of solidarity with an inter-subjective horizon of values, Šarfī's emphasis on the ethical aspects of the Qurʾān must be seen in the context of his critique of *turāṯ*:

> Mais la solidarité entre les individus s'est aujourd'hui établie sur

> des bases nouvelles qui n'ont pas besoin de justification religieuse, ce qui a provoqué, au cours des deux derniers siècles, une contestation de fait des formes traditionelles de la piété. La conséquence de cette situation sans précédent, c'est que les religions institutionelles ont été dépossedées, à leur corps défendant, de leur rôle traditionnel, sous la pression conjuguée et irrésistible de la réalité et de la pensée modernes. (Ibid. 213)
>
> (But today solidarity between individuals is established on new bases which do not need religious justification; a fact which, over the last two centuries, has challenged the traditional forms of piety. The consequence of this unprecedented situation is that the institutional religions, against their will, have been dispossessed of their traditional role by the combined and irresistible pressure of reality and modern thought.)

The main objective of introducing Qurʾānic ethics as an inexceedable horizon is to underline the fact that neither the Qurʾān nor Islām is a dead artifact belonging to a museum. Indeed, notwithstanding institutionalized Islām, the Qurʾān is perceived as a living text that addresses the believers in their current situation. Thus, according to Šarfī the Qurʾān is a text to be appropriated by the believers, and this appropriation can take place in infinite ways. It encourages the believer to reflect on the norms of society and the relation between good and evil without providing any ready-made solutions.

Conclusion

ʿAbdelmaǧīd Šarfī's reading of the prophetic message as discourse rather than text, his interpretation of 'the seal of the prophets' and his conception of a Qurʾānic ethics of liberation reveals an intellectual enterprise that is highly engaged and committed. Šarfī writes in Arabic to an Arab-Muslim reader with the explicit goal of challenging the traditional Islamic disciplines and methodologies. As such, his academic work could be labeled 'reformist'. On the one hand, he seeks to introduce a new hermeneutics to present-day Muslims which acknowledges the living status of the Qurʾān in the lives of the believers while emphasizing that Islām is neither unique in time, place or in 'essence'. Whereas Šarfī proposes that the prophetic message is read as an act of emancipation which to him reflects individual liberty, human rights and democracy, he is aware that no person, including himself, can claim that his or her interpretation of 'Islām' is the only correct interpretation as it is a historical fact that the notion 'Islām' has been accommodated to both diverse and contradictory situations throughout its long history.

Seen from another perspective, however, his academic work is

more than a mere 'reformist' project. The epistemological and methodological underpinnings of his work do not simply challenge the traditional Islamic disciplines; they reveal a critical perspective on the field of Islamic Studies in general as well. How do we adequately approach the Qurʾān and the reception of it throughout history? Whereas Islamic Studies have been dominated by philological, historical analyses of the most 'representative' texts, on the one hand, and social scientific research with primary focuses on more 'short-term' socio-political issues, on the other hand, scholars, such as Šarfī and Arkoun, propose a multidisciplinary approach to the field. With primary focus on philosophy, literary theory and postcolonial criticism they seek to challenge any transference of *taqlīd* (imitation) to modern scholarship where "'Islām' is constructed as a substantial, unified and unifying body of beliefs, non-beliefs, institutions, customs, stabilized theological, legal and ethical doctrines, recurrent practices and representations." (Arkoun 2006: 225).

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Under the Gaze of Double Critique: De-colonisation, De-sacralisation and the Orphan Book

Joshua Sabih

Abstract

Instead of the orientalist reformist paradigm as frame and episteme, Khatibi proposes a theory of double critique, critical liminality that targets, in a bi-directional movement, a Eurocentric or Orientalist discourse and an ethnocentric local discourse. Three critical concepts, constitutive of the theory of double critique: decolonisation, desacralisation and the orphan book are operative in Khatibi´s analysis of Orientalism, identity, and the issue of origin. As a professional outsider, Khatibi follows conceptually and methodologically the rules of the epistemological critique in an enunciation of negotiation, not of negation; a site of hybridity.

This limited knowledge will allow me perhaps to add that the founding of the Muḥammadan religion seems to me to be an abbreviated repetition of the Jewish one, in imitation of which it made its appearance. (Freud, 1967:177).

In a word, it can be said that Islam is an empty place in the theory of psychoanalysis. (Khatibi, (2002:237)[1]

Toute religion, toute culture, toute communauté de mémoire ou de langue ne peut être Soi à son commencement, ne peut venir à Soi avant d'avoir fait l´épreuve de l'autre et de l´Étranger. (Benslama, 2002:31)

Curse of affiliation: hermeneutical conflict

The question of how *does* and/or *should*[2] a *native Muslim* intellectual (*muṯaqqaf),* thinker (*mufakkir)* and religious scholar (*ʿālim/faqīh)*[3]

[1] As indicated by Khatibi himself this article appeared for the first time in the journal *Les Temps Modernes*, in October 1977 under the title "Le Maghreb comme horizon de pensée", and re-edited later in his book *Maghreb Pluriel* in 1983. I should also indicate that all translations into English are mine.

[2] "Does" and "should" are two modes of action. While the first is an action-as-process, the second is action-as-deontology.

[3] Terms "intellectual" (*muṯaqqaf*), "thinker" (*mufakkir*) and "religious scholar" (*ʿālim*/ *faqīh*) are three heterogeneous - though interdependent categories of the post-Nahda thought. These categories are framed within a

approach islam[4] and the Qur'ān - a foundational text of Islamic religion and Arab-Islamic civilisation - touches upon what I call here the *curse of affiliation* (origin) of the *thinking subject* in its relation to the *object of study*: Islamic Studies, and how one *should* "evaluate" and "categorise" what they say about this object of study, i.e., how we today should/ought approach this vast domain of utterances/discourses - knowing very well the intricacies of the task at hand - that these three categories and agents produce on their *proper* cultural heritage (*turāṯ*). In other words, the way this issue has been articulated since the beginning of the Arab *Nahda* in the second half of the 19th

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complex network of relationships that are structured locally and transnationally.

[4] The position taken in this article is that the term *islam* is written with a lowercase (i). However, I will not alter the orthography of the term Islam in quoted references. This is not a grammatical mistake, but purposefully a deconstruction of the grammaticalised - canonised - essentialisation of the orthodox representation of islam, (the Islam, the One, the Arabic, etc.). On this point, see my discussion of Khatibi on the *orphan book* in this article. The use of critical language by the critical discourse begins in how we trans-scribe this representation - as embedded *trans-lation* - into a hybrid site, a site of *negotiation*, not of *negation* (Bhabha 2004). Cf. my unpublished paper "Transcription as an embedded translation: Arabic & French in Driss Chraibi's Novels, in *Second Writers´ and Literary Translators´ International Congress, WALTIC* 2010 Congress, Turkey, and my upcoming book together with a student of mine, Jacob Knak Christensen, a promising scholar in Judaeo-Arabic Studies, *Transliteration as embedded translation: the Jew, the Arab in Hybrid Arabic* (2016). Khatibi speaks about "the possibility of re-questioning everything in islam...The islam of the Indonesian, the islam of the Sudanese and the islam of the Moroccan are not the same. There is a rift in the unity of language and believes: The Qur'ān is not the sole paradigm that structures the imaginary and thought (by the Arabic language), and at the same time structures society and the Islamic polis. There is a rift. A rift which is perhaps striking in the case of Indonesia, Malaysia...There is a scission between the founding myth in the Qur'ānic text - a myth that is hardly known - and the founding myths of people's mythologies - Indonesian, Malay." (Khatibi 2002:433). The impossibility of origin is due to the fact that origin is not *palimpsestuous*, which presupposes an origin (hyper-) and copies (hypo-), but *translational* (Bloom, 1973; Genette, 1982). Binary origin/copy expresses the hegemonic of the Arab/Arabic in its relation to the non-Arab/Arabic. The same applies to the binary *jāhiliya* / *islam*. The latter is conceived in the mythic account of origin as a negation of the former. This negation is emulated / copied / mimicked in the fundamentalist discourse as a prerequisite of the true faith. There is however, a crisis of *naming* in Western and Islamic research traditions with regard to this study-object that is called *Islam/islam*. Crisis of naming - a paradox of an irreducible Islam (theology of the One) and a plural islam (islams) - that still inhabits the descriptive language of what Benslama calls "war of subjectivities". I see in Bergo and Smith´s re-use of Cohen and Zagury-Orly´s French term *judéités* in the English translation *"Judeities: Questions for Jacques Derrida"* an attempt to solve the tension between the terms: *judaism, jewishness* etc. On this issue see Derrida´s input with regard to Yerushalmi´s discussion of the two terms *judaism, jewishness.* (Derrida and Pernowitz, 1995; Bergo, Zagury-Orly & Cohen, 2007; Derrida, 2014) I must admit that addressing this issue should be a priority for modern critical thought! Beginning with introducing neologisms *islam, islams*, we should be consistent in our use of them in the manner of Khatibi´s double critique. (Cf. Azameh, 1993; Benslama, 2002)

century - despite how odd this may sound - is an orientalist issue which has, paradoxically, been mimetically internalized - and since then reiterated- by essentialist Muslims themselves, and to which, inevitably, critical thought (al-*fikr al-naqdī)* of all ideological affiliations have to relate: two types of affiliations/genealogies- mutually exclusive - are sustained: faith/tradition versus scientificity/modernity[5]. Arkoun (1985:95) has rightly noticed that in most of Muslims' reactions, polemical in character, to Orientalism there is one given presumption: "the affiliation of the Muslim community confers a particular epistemological validity to which *non-Muslims have no access with regard to all discourses on Islam as religion, culture and history."*

As we shall see later, it is quite common that both essentialist discourses, Islamic (whether religious or nationalist) and orientalist[6], harbour a feeling of suspicion towards native Muslim researchers whose critical discourse follows the rules of the epistemological criticism; the latter group is simply disqualified. They are considered as neither western nor orientals[7]. (Gunther, 2013, Arkoun, 2007) Actually, the critical discourse - a hybrid site - of contemporary "native Muslim intellectuals[8] - dare, in one simultaneous double act, to break away a) from being merely an orientalist objectified subject, lacking any scientific (critical) language, "native informant" (Spivak 1999), and b) from what Arkoun calls *dogmatic enclosure* (Arkoun 2007). Breaking away should be understood as a process. That is *being in the process of breaking away*. Instantaneous breaks, however, make everything fall into the abyss.

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[5] The issue of how this issue was posed in the formative and classical periods of islam is beyond the scope of this article. The thing that the reader should retain here is that Arab-Islamic literature attests to the figure and profession of the intellectual - independent and critical one in particular. Besides, Qurʾānic archive has preserved the views of Arabs: Christians, Jews, Hanifs, and Pagans etc.- who contested Muḥammad´s prophethood on various important points - are actually recorded. On the notion of "intellectual" in the Middle Ages see (Le Goff, 1993; Urvoy, 1996)

[6] The term "orientalist" used in this article refers to western discourse(s) about the orient: Body of knowledge, epistemology, ideology, worldview etc.

[7] In another context, Derrida re-asks the question that J. H. Yerushalmi asks in his book *Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*: "Professor Freud, at this point I find it futile to ask whether, *genetically or structurally, psychoanalysis is really a Jewish science*; that we shall know, if it is at all knowable, only when much future work has been done. Much will depend, of course, on how the very terms Jewish and science are to be defined."(Quoted in Derrida and Prenowitz, 1995:28). Is psychoanalysis a Jewish science? Khatibi takes his cue from this very question in his article that I am presenting/discussing in this paper: "Frontiers: Between Psychoanalysis and islam". [Emphasis is mine]

[8] For the sake of simplicity, I shall use the terms *intellectual* and *thinker* interchangeably, and in opposition to the religious scholar, whom I call *cleric*. When I add the qualifier critical to the terms *intellectual* and *thinker*, I refer to a category of post-modernist/postcolonial thought that challenges the very notion of affiliation - or what Freud calls " family romance".

Before attending to Khatibi's critical discourse on French orientalism and exercising psychoanalysis as *frontierial*[9] position in the language and exercise of a profession, I would like to visit- as a *frontierial scholar myself* [10]- this seems-to-be-forever-debated issue: this seemingly inescapable curse of affiliation - palimpsestuous text: origin and its duplications - that critical "native Muslim" intellectuals, whom both foundational metaphysics and politics of identity have condemned them to, have tried to debunk; the irreducible essence of islam as *absolute-other* . In general terms - knowing too well how dangerous and slippery this can be and lead to - any critical intellectual (Muslim genealogy: the racial, ethnic and the religious are amalgamated) - is construed/imagined as *absolute-other* trapped in Sisyphean state. In this optic, any act of decolonisation and desacralisation that critical thinkers like Khatibi[11] - as one of these rare theoreticians and practitioner of *critique double* - are engaged in is seen as a meaningless act of repetition and borrowing: hence the notion of islamicising foreign knowledge.[12] Nothing new under the sun says the biblical Solomon! The gatekeepers of both Western scholars on islam in the name of science and objectivity, and Muslim clerics in the name of orthodoxy brand as a *unscientific*/*heretic* any critical (discourse) about any (Islamic topic) that trespasses the

[9] I have chosen to render the French adjective *frontalier* by *frontierial* - not frontier-like, or boundary - because the last terms do not do justice to the meaning of the French term: "Qui habite une région voisine d´une frontière, et, en particulier, qui va travailler chaque jour au-delà de cette frontière." ("A person who lives in a region neighbouring a border, and, in particular, someone who crosses that border every day to go to work") Larousse. A frontierial critique is understood as double critique in the sense of *critical liminality*. See Raja Rhouni´s use of Khatibi´s double critique as critical liminality in her analysis of the Work of Fatima Mernissi. (Rhouni, 2010)

[10] On this autobiographical note, I would like to draw the attention of the reader that I too bear the mark of this curse of affiliation(s) in my body (-ies), my tongue(s), and my trans-disciplinary profession. It is not strange that my take on problems and issues of Orientalism, post-colonial and critical thinking is reflexive. It breaks away – as I identify myself with the stance that reflexive thinkers take on - with traditional thought. (cf. Khatibi, 2002)

[11] Abdelkébir al-Khatibi (Khatibi 1938-2009) is a prolific Moroccan thinker, philosopher sociologist, poet, novelist and activist. He has studied sociology at the University of Sorbonne in Paris. He earned his doctorate in 1968. Although he wrote almost exclusively in French, he was well versed in Arabic. Regarding his bibliography see for instance his *Oeuvres complètes* in three volumes: vol.1: novels, vol.2: poetry, vol.3: essays, which were published in 2008. He was of course one of the leading Arab trans-lational/trans-national thinkers who worked on various fronts: the political, the cultural, the academic, the literary, the social etc. Already in 1968, Khatibi was engaged in the postcolonial debate that Marxist intellectuals inaugurated in the movement around the journal *Souffles*. Cf. Sefrioui 2013, Bonn 1999)

[12] See in this paper, Khatibi´s and Arkoun´s discussions of the following notions: *ideological adaptation of metaphysical concepts*, and the *polemical aspects of the Islamic discourses* respectively. As indicated in note 7 (supra), Khatibi´s discussion of Freud´s psychoanalysis is not intended as an islamicising project.

"lies"[13], the *norms* (methodology) and *boundaries* (subject matter) that are paradoxically agreed upon. It goes without saying that native intellectuals and religious scholars - clerics - are not and have never been a *homogenous* group. In the same vein, we know that Arab-Islamic thought has never been *exclusively* religious or the sole property of a particular group. This is not a question of genre, but rather a question of discourses and representations, their conflictual relations, and their social and political agency.

The narrativisation of Arab-Islamic modern thought takes its cue from a Eurocentric narrative of Western Modernity being universalised in a double violent act - Bonaparte´s invasion of Egypt in 1798. Bonaparte came to Egypt with an *army of soldiers* and *men of learning*. The Arab Orient became an object of military, economic and political subjugation, and an object of study (hence Orientalism as a discourse on the Orient). This historical event is mythologized as the *beginning* and *catalyser* of modern Arab-Islamic thought. A new chronology in evenemential historiography: a pre-modern and modern Arab-Islamic thought[14]. A "tailored" modernity began as process of a much less discussed dichotomy: the translatable and the untranslatable[15]. A new *problematic* was born: the term-pair *aṣāla wal-muʿāṣara* (authenticity and modernity). In fact, the term *muʿāṣara* denotes the idea of contemporaneity. That is being in the time lived as contemporaneity, and often is construed discursively as presence versus absence, a binary of opposition and hegemony: Western presence and Muslim absence; two opposing times, world views, discursive modes that are for ever *essentialised* and *essentialising*. Cultural differences, in these logicising discourses, are

[13] Bhabha speaks of this "lie" in the chapter " Articulating the Archaic: Cultural difference and colonial nonsense" as follows: " If a Muslim is coerced into speaking a Christian truth he denies the logic of his senses.... A part of like "folly" that is untranslatable, inexplicable, unknowable, yet repeatedly transmitted in the name of the native. What emerges in these lies that never speak the "whole" truth, come to be circulated from mouth to mouth, book to book, is the institutionalisation of a very specific discursive form of paranoia." (Bhabha, 2004:197).

[14] Worth mentioning that the attempt to project European history on Arab-Islamic history in the name of historicity has utterly failed. Besides positivism, classical Marxism - or the Eurocentric reading of Marxism and their proponents in the Arab world- has seen the universalization of Capitalism as a necessary and an unavoidable historical phase. Once again the colonial discourse has been reproduced - auto-orientalism or domestic orientalism! As we know now that capitalism has not been universalised in the Arab World, but rather a new division of worlds another different relations of production.

[15] For instance, Samah Selim, in her discussion of the politics of translation in Egypt in the 19th 1nd 20th centuries distinguishes between "authorised version of texts, which is tied up with power" and free zone (unauthorized) version of texts (detective novel or what one calls popular literature); a genre-based translation according to which one finds formal (state sponsored) and informal (individual) translations. The latter, "unlike scientific ones, were not funded and organized by the state, but were instead "clandestine, meandering, and quite mischievous." (mlynxqualey, 2015:1). Cf. Selim, 2010)

enunciated in terms of power politics: dialectics of permanent negation; a sort of theology of election, according to which only one group, the detainer of the absolute truth will be saved[16]. The emergence of modern Islamic Studies, inter alia, was conceived within this socio-political frame of asymmetrical power-relations. It is, therefore, of an utmost importance that we recognise this fact, obvious to all who wants to see it: the one, who does or should deal with this body of knowledge, does not escape these conditions of "birth", the consequence of which *represented* and *articulated* in three kinds of discourses: *Islamic*, *Orientalist*, and *Critical*. While the first two represent two sides of the same coin: essentialising discourse that reproduce and sustain a structural separation between what is Islamic and what is Western, the latter, notwithstanding, tends to follow conceptually and methodologically the rules of the epistemological critique in an enunciation of negotiation - not negation; a site of hybridity.

In this paper, I intend to focus on the Khatibi's *double critique* as a reflexive theory and praxis of decolonisation, desacralisation and a labour of incessant de-essentialisation of all sorts of affiliations, "targeting both a Eurocentric or Orientalist discourse and an ethnocentric local discourse." (Rhouni, 2008:47) In the last part of this paper, I shall direct my gaze - that of an accomplice - to Khatibi's notion of *Muḥammad as the orphan book* through an *embroidering* and *embroidered*[17]double reading - his and mine, reading and re-reading as thought-other[18] - of Freud's enunciation on "Islam" as an

[16] This theology of the elected one has been crystallized by the dogmatic reason which characterises the religious discourse: Jewish, Christian, Muslim etc.

[17] Here, we are presented for and in the presence of a critical concept. Before its conceptualisation as such, it used to be– and still is – a metaphorisation of the bilingual: Arabic-Hebrew in Judaeo-Moroccan poetry. A minority discourse on "being together as difference" and "in space architecture and language, which the term *ṭ.r.z.* (passive participle: *maṭrūz: embroidered*) in both Arabic and Moroccan lexicographies convey. The idea of *painstakingly making something* – a cloth, building, morals, and utterance – looks differently beautiful is inherent in the term *maṭrūz: embroidered*. For instance, embroidering a cloth by sewing patterns on it with thread transforms the cloth into something else: handkerchief, dress, etc. I have conceptualized this term as a critical liminality in my work on Sami Shalom Chetrit´s political poetry and *Maṭrūz identity.* (Sabih, 2009).

[18] What does reading, re-reading as thought-other mean? Khatibi presents this double reading in his article "La Sexualité selon le Coran" (Sexuality according the Qur´an) in which he sets his reading as a reading of another reading or reading of another´s reading. Here, he refers to his reading of the Qur'ān and his reading of Arkoun´s reading of the Qur´an. Khatibi´s reading consists of two distinct reading events:

1. Reading as a suspension of "the immense archive of glosses and exegesis on and from the Qur´an." In order words Khatibi wants to read the Qur'ān apart from the prophet´s Ḥadīṯ or the Bible. Suspension in the act of reading does not imply its rejection or its negation. He chooses the "Qurʾānic perspective in itself with regard to the issue of

"abbreviated repetition" and an "imitation" of Jewish religion. Reading Khatibi is not an easy task. Every single word throws its reader to a hierarchy of genres, references, times, places, theories and languages. For this reason, I need to map once again a typology of various literary systems and their relational interdependence in order for the reader to understand where this double critique stands.

To sum up, one notices two prominent discourses: 1) a mimetic: which "mimics methods, conceptual devices, modes of composition and argumentation of Western scientific discourse and its logo-centrism into a kind of *auto*-orientalist discourse that reproduces the same binary oppositions and their inter-negating relations: Orient/West, religion/scientificity, pre-modern/modern etc., 2) a bi-directional critical liminality that moves from and into the margin. In this movement, it de-centres all centres and itself, that the very idea of *centrism.* This theory of double critique, which contains the notion of *mise en crise* (putting into crisis /challenging), is often forgotten. *Critique* as putting in crisis both *itself* and the object under its scrutiny. In this sense too, critique is *double*: critique of its intrinsic law and of societal law." (Khatibi 1981:319)[19]

The difference between the two can be demonstrated, for instance, in how Taha Hussein´s and Khatibi´s critical approaches to the Qurʾān. Both were attentive to the theoretical and methodological challenges that the critical intellectual in a modern setting were facing. The result: two positions/discourses: a mimetic reading[20] and double critique reading, a *pensée-autre*. To illustrate the latter point further - and in conjunction with our main topic - the Qurʾānic text has become - sometimes inadvertently - for a great number of

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sexuality – not sex – without any reference – or seldom – to other monotheistic texts." (Khatibi, 2002:241). Suspension of Ḥadīṯ - in double-crtique reading of the Qur'ān - is a deconstruction of the very concept *of sacralisation of meaning as self-generating* - latent in Orthodoxy´s epistemology, and a suspension of the biblical debt": The Bible is imagined as *orgin* and the Qur'ān as *a borrower/borrowing.*

2. Reading as actualisation of other critical readings, as for instance Arkoun´s reading, according to which "a programme of reading consists of three moments: a) a *linguistic moment* that will allow for a descovery of the covert order beneath the fragmented overt structure; b) an *anthropoligical moment* which will consist in recognsing the language of the mythical structure in the Qur´an; and c) a historical content in which the impact and limitations of logico-lexicographic exegeses and imaginative exegeses that Muslims have attemped so far will be defined." (ibid.) (Cf. Arkoun 1970, 2001).

[19] " L´idée souvent oubliée d'une mise en crise. La critique comme mise en crise á la fois d'elle même et de l'objet dont elle s'occupe...En ce sens aussi, la critique est double: critique de sa loi intrinsèque, et celle de la loi sociétale." (Khatibi, 2002: 319). This text was first published in 1981, and later in 2002.

[20] The same applies to al-Jābirī's comprehensive reading (commentary) of the Qur´ān. He was the only modern critical thinker and philosopher who has produced a four-volumes *tafsīr*, in which he tried to reconstruct the "historicity" of the Qur'ān as *tanzīl*, lost in classical exegesis of the Qur'ān as *muṣḥaf* (codified Qur'ānic text).

contemporary Arab thinkers an existentialist question, a *hermeneutical* battlefield on which these intellectuals have been trying to *recover* the Qurʾān from its self-imposing custodians - religious clerics - and restore it back to what it is - a palimpsest and an origin-less translation, a polyphonic text accessible by and to all. The common concern - besides ideology and politics - for these *committed* intellectuals is, primarily, issues of epistemology, methodology, and identity. In the book *fī al-šiʿr al-jāhilī* (about *jāhilī* poetry)[21] - if one should choose a beginning among many beginnings[22] - the Egyptian, saint Simonian and Descartian positivist, Taha Hussein called upon Arabs to set aside their emotional bias and engage, instead, in a critical study of their literary and religious *heritage* - (*al-šiʿr al-jāhilī*). He meant that Arabs should do it as if they were *strangers* (occidentals)[23]. (Hussein, 1926) The most vocal reactions – that have been accredited the privileged status of authenticity and representativeness ever since – were the reactionary voices of Muslim Orthodoxy[24]. These authenticity and representativeness should be reflected in epistemology, methodology and identity in opposition to

[21] Well! This is the crux of the matter. I am trying to avoid the term *pre-Islamic* that has been standardised in modern scholarship. The main idea of Taha Hussein is that if one should find a text that could tell us anything trustworthy about Arab Jāhilī society, the Qur'ān would be the right one, not the so-called "pre-Islamic" poetry. My position is that the Qur'ān becomes a Jāhilī product, a *frontierial text*, and a discourse – a very significant one I must add - on this yet-to-be chartered *Jāhilī society.*

[22] Beginning does not mean origin, but simply an emerging. Or as Gil Anidjar has articulated it: "In the beginning, there was no beginning" (Anidjar, 2008: 84).

[23] Urvoy considers Hussein as one of the precursors of modern Muslim critical thought. In my view, Urvoy´s remark about Taha Hussein´s call to approach Arab cultural heritage, as a foreigner/outsider did not had the attention it deserved (cf. Urvoy 2006:607). As a matter of fact, Hussein´s positivist reading of "pre-Islamic" poetry was a clear expression of a euro-logo-centrism that considered western modernity as universal, and therefore should be emulated. Arab societies future was the West, not the orient. Hussein´s reading Arab-Islamic cultural heritage as a stranger means in fact as a westerner does; a wordplay on: *ġarīb* (stranger/foreigner/outsider) and *ġarbī* westerner): Hussein´s reading is, therefore, one-directional critique, whereas Khatibi´s conception of the outsider/stranger is that of *professional*: a double critique reading that decolonises, de-sacralises, and de-centralises all essentialising/essentialised thought.

[24] According to Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714): "L'orthodoxie ne peut pas être définie comme un dogme, mais résulte simplement de la situation privilégiée obtenue par des clercs en échange d'un soutien inconditionnel aux puissances politiques. Des lors on ne peut pas parler d´objectivation dogmatique d´un message religieux, d'un kérygme, mais seulement de l'organisation d'un système politique et clérical", (Orthodoxy can not be defined as a dogma, but simply as the result of the privileged position achieved by the clerics in exchange for unconditional support for the political powers. Thenceforth we cannot speak of any dogmatic objectification of the religious message, a kerygma, but of an organization of a political system and clerical only.), (Meslin, 1973: 31). This Passage is also quoted in Sylvain Jean Gabriel SANCHEZ L'historiographie du priscillianisme (1559-2012) http://sjgsanchez.free.fr/historiogsanchez.pdf, pp.6-7

western scholarship: Islamic, epistemology, methodology and identity are essentialised by and through both Orientalism (for instance colonial discourse) and traditionalist islam, and later on through Neo-Orientalism and a Political islam; both power discourses are policing this imagined borderline.

Failing to see beyond the *curse of confessional* and *cultural affiliations*, and their *ethnicisation and politicisation*, worthy of biblical genealogy[25], and how double critique actually destabilises all sorts of affiliations and de-sacralises all religions, mythical origins, John Erickson finds it bewildering that four thinkers[26], among whom Khatibi, are serving not only two masters as it were: *Muslim* (Sunnī) *faith system* and *Western* culture, literature and thought, but also serving two binary systems at the same time: a faith system versus a secular system!! As expected[27] he painted a portrait of what Khatibi would call Sartre shedding tears[28]:

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[25] Ethnicisation and politicisation, in Western discourse, of the categories *Muslim* and *Jew* – which were primarily religious and theological categories - began in the period of the enlightenment during the Catholic Reconquista and the expulsion of Jews and Muslims of the Iberian Peninsula. (Cf. Anidjar, 2003; 2008)

[26] The four postcolonial thinkers whose writings Erickson investigates are: Tahar ben Jelloun, Abdelkébir Khatibi (Morocco), Assia Djebar (Algeria), and Salman Rushdie (Indian subcontinent).

[27] The expression "as expected" is a deliberate invitation for trouble. It is *une mise en crise* of who-expects-what-from-whom? In anticipation, I was expecting Erickson to tell us exactly about his own pre-conceived expectation: these four Muslim thinkers were expected to be and behave as believers: How does a Muslim believer read in a Sisyphean manner his own system of faith through western lens (à la Prometheus)? It is the destiny of Khatibi – as expected - to be in this Sisyphean state: trapped in being a Muslim believer, but he should leave (as expected) the critical work to Orientalism. What Erickson fails to see is that Khatibi is, epistemologically, challenging this notion of *expected-of him to be and act as a believer*, this curse of affiliation (estrangement) through double critique in order to unmask it as power discourse. Double Critique is not a western theory. It is not an Islamic theory either. It does not need to be. It is simply a theory and praxis of the transtextual that is constantly and insistently de-constructing all master narratives.

[28] On this Khatibian allegory, see please my forthcoming translation of Khatibi´s book: *Vomito blanco: sionisme et la conscience malheureuse* (Vomito Blanco: Zionism and the Unhappy Consciousness), specially the second chapter: « les larmes de Sartre » (Sartre´s tears): "Même Sartre - de coutume un dialecticien unique - y perd la tête: le dialecticien s´improvise en taoïste, puisqu´il accepte les contraires au même temps, mais un mauvais taoïste, puisque cette contradiction interne á son system ne peut être proférée que dans un déchirement indépassable: c'est encore la conscience malheureuse qui fait Sartre verse ses larmes sans pouvoir les essuyer avec sa dialectique éblouie." (Even Sartre - usually a unique dialectician - loses his tongue in all this: a dialectician who acts now as taoist. He accepts two opposing positions at the same time. Sartre is, however, a bad taoist, since he is unable to utter this contradiction - internal part of its system - unless it comes out as an unsurpassable rift: it is the unhappy consciousness that once again causes Sartre to shed his tears without being able to wipe them with his dazzled dialectics); Khatibi, 1974: 20-21

> The writers I am about to study are, to varying degrees, *believers in the Islamic (Sunnī) faith system*, and *draw willingly and strongly upon western culture, literature and thought*. But in strikingly different ways, their writings refute or clash with certain of the strictures imposed in the name of Word, of the Qurʾān, the Sunna. (Erickson, 1998: 2)

Instead of *negation* - in Erickson´s case mutual negation - through which essentialising discourses articulate cultural and identity difference, Khatibi proposes what Homi Bhabha calls *negotiation/translation- not compromise*[29] . The notion of negotiation " conveys a temporality that enables the post-colonial mind to articulate antagonistic or contradictory elements: a dialectics without the emergence of a teleological or transcendent History." (Bhabha, 2004: 37) At this juncture, the question is no longer whether the critical discourse, operating as double critique, should or should not re-iterate the discourses that it intends to examine, but rather it is a

[29] Compromise is what characterises every reformist paradigm. In Arabic the term used is *tawfīq,* an operative key concept that Arab critical thought have been deconstructing for ages now! In the classical period, several forms of reformist paradigm have seen the light: In law, al-Shafiʾī´s (d. 820) canonisation of *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Sunnī Jurisprudence) was a form of compromise between rational-bound approach and tradition-bound approach. In theology, Abu al-Hasan al-Ashʿarī´s (d. 936) canonisation of *uṣūl al-dīn* (Sunnī Creed) was seen as a compromise between the Muʿtazila and ahl-Ḥadīṯ with regard to the issue of status od the Qur'ān (whether it was created [Muʿtazila] or not-created [ahl-Ḥadīṯ]). According to this paradigm, reform was seen as a religious duty on the one hand, and was articulated as a synthetic project of conflicting positions, literary systems (ideas, interpretations, ideologies etc.) on the other. The same happened in the great reform of Arabic language, which Baġdād school stood for: a compromise between Kūfa and Baṣra schools. In modern reformist paradigm, the term-pair *al-ʾaṣāla wal-muʿāṣra*, the history of which shows clearly that the term *ʾaṣāla* is paradoxical, both in terms of its use by opposing discourses, and in terms of its fossilised nature, similar to Arkoun calls the "dogmatic mind". The latter is an imagined impenetrable fortress that characterizes every fundamentalist-like thought. The issue of *al-ʾaṣāla wal-muʿāṣra* has been dealt with differently, from different angles, in every Arab and Islamic society, and in different periods. Cf. Beleqziz, 2009) The problematic of *al-ʾaṣāla wal-muʿāṣara* in Arab/Islamic thought is exclusively Muslim or religious. It was *the problematic* to and from which all movements of thought had to relate: Muslims, Christians, and Jews. While Muslims and Christians have been investigated, Jewish role in Arab *Nahḍa* is still awaiting serious work. Cf. Behar´s and Benite´s outstanding work: *Modern Middle Eastern Jewish Thought: Writings on Identity, Politics, and Culture 1983-1958.* It shows how wanting are the current discourses on *Nahḍa and Nahḍa agents.* Let´s hear from one of these agents, an early Jewish feminist and the founder of the organization *nahḍat al-nisāʾ* from Lebanon: " My sisters, God will not change a people until they change themselves (a quote from the Qur´an, Q. 13:11), and this applies to us, the women of the East … A woman - with all pride - is the essence of life and its joy, the poetry of beauty and perfection ...when we recite a poem by *al-Ma`arri*, *al-Mutanabbi*, or Abu *Tammam al-Ta´i."* (Behar and Benite, 2013: Chap.10). This passage is from Esther Azhari Moyal´s (d. 1948) address at the American College for Girls in Beirut.

question of form, meaning, and position that critical discourse bestows on them. Khatibi considers any call to reject the West an illusion for the simple reason that the West resides in "us" Arabs. The question of whether the West resides in "us", Arabs, or not becomes a question of *how* and *what sort of west* resides in "us" Arabs, *and what sort of "us" arabs*:

> Know that the Arabs´ problem – in its extreme form – we believe, is a *west, whose difference is difficult to deal with*…if the *west is in us* - not as an absolute entity [metaphysical idea], but as a *difference* that we are able to compare to another *difference.* Khatibi, 2000:30

When we change the vantage of point and remove any barriers that hinder the weaving movements[30] of double critique, Erickson´s split identity - a west versus an east - is replaced by a hybrid site. The west resides in the Arab-subject not as an absolute difference, but as a comparable difference: The Arab-subject is a bilingual being[31].

Roussillon, a French sociologist of modern Arab societies, has tried, somehow, to penetrate unsuccessfully into the "fortress" of what Arkoun calls the "hermeneutical circle" inside which Khatibi resides, and upon its body he exercises his intimate gaze. Roussillon has proposed *clôture réformiste* (reformist enclosure)[32] as a substitute notion to Arkoun´s "hermeneutical circle". According to him *reform* in contemporary Islamic thought is a *debate*, rather than a *doctrine*[33];

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[30] The expression "weaving movements" recalls the imagery of the movement of the embroidering needle and the bilingual hand that inter-laces poetry. (See note 17)

[31] Bilingualism is not necessarily two languages, but a concept that denotes the deconstruction of the One. Every language is diglossic, says Khatibi: the spoken and the written. An interpretative discussion of this concept in relation to Khatibi´s concept of *the orphan book* can be found further down in of this paper.

[32] Unlike what the French term *clôture* (translated here as enclosure) denotes, Alain Roussillon suggests here " un quelconque << enfermement >> de pensées ou de curiosités. Le recours á cette catégorie << clôture >> vise plutôt à saisir le principe de l´unité d'un débat, c'est-à-dire la façon dont, précisément, au-delà des divergences de posture, les différentes pensées en présence ont en commun de se situer par rapport à un certain nombre d´interrogations qui sont les même pour tous." (Whatever "confinement" of thoughts or curiosities. (Using this category "enclosure" aims rather at grasping the principle of unity of a debate. That is the manner according to which - beyond any divergences of position, the different lines of thought present have in common: namely to approach a certain number of interrogations that are identical to them all.) Roussillon, 2005:12.

[33] One of the salient aspects of "reform as doctrine" in western religious reformation was the de-sacralisation of the Roman Catholic perception of the sacredness of the Bible (*muqaddas*). According to the latter any access to the Holy Bible was forbidden for the non-clergy. Reform, in the protestant reformation, meant de-sacralising this catholic perception by making the Bible available in non-Latin vernaculars. In other words, what was de-sacralised by the protestant reformist was the *Latin Bible canonised by the*

a debate for everyone to pitch in, irrespective of intellectual reference or affiliation. From the 19th century onwards, *reform* (*iṣlāḥ*) has been debated within the term-pair *al-ʾaṣāla wal-muʿāṣara* (understood as either authenticity *and* modernity or authenticity *or* modernity). In the 19th century these two terms had a mimetic reflections: two geographical locations and two civilizational models: East and West respectively. In his *reformist enclosure,* Roussillon failed to find a place for frontierial thinkers that exercise critical liminality. "He failed to find", to put it mildly, is an expression of a methodological inability and epistemological myopia towards non-reformist paradigm. Khatibi - a professional outsider, is he a partaker of the reform debate? Is he its Judas? Or is he "Europe´s francophone, who has undressed it"?[34]

Arkoun´s "hermeneutical conflict", however, maps Islamic discourses and orientalist discourses in a triangular relation with and in opposition to scientific thought. In this triangular relation, the first two discourses are subjected to the scrutinising gaze of the critical mind: Where epistemology and ideology are "undressed" and made to stand naked. Arkoun confesses that ideology has often the upper hand in modern Arab-Islamic thought, even among some of the most vocal Arab intellectuals - as in the case of the Moroccan historian and philosopher Abdallah Laroui[35] - due to the impact of the anti-colonial

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only sacred church: heavenly Jerusalem. The History of the Bible in Arab-Islamic Orient had a different story. The Bible has been translated into Aramaic, Syriac, Coptic… and Arabic – even before the Mohamed mission. The Qur'ān, however, has always been available to those who could read, even to non-Muslims: Jews and Christians. The metaphysics of the One: one God, One religion, one language common to monotheism is a mythic account of the issue of *origin.* The rich debate in classical islam, even in the Qur'ānic text - about the Qur'ān, its divine source, composition, versions, etc., is a clear witness to that effect. Nowadays, Muslim orthodoxy tries to prevent today's Muslims from having similar debates in public. The official Ulama use the argument that such debates would only lead to the perdition of the common people. In this regard see the interesting debate in post revolution Tunisia on "the Qur'ān between Revelation and Text" organised by Tn-Médias and which TV-channel broadcasted in August 2011. http://vb.tafsīr .net/tafsir27981/#.VSZfDFy9uqw

One thing should retain whenever we discuss the issue of reform in the Arab-Islamic context is that from a stage as these lexicographicalised terms: *tajdīd, ʾiṣlāḥ, ʾijtihād, ʾiḥyāʾ, ʾinbiʿāṯ* (*baʿṯ*) indicate, reform has been internalized in the religious, the social, the political, cultural registers.

[34] The last question is inspired verbatim by Réda Bensmaïa´s title of his chapter: "Exotopia or L´Europe mise à nu par ses francophones, même!" (Bensmaïa, 2010)

[35]Arkoun refers to Laroui´s book *L'Idéologie arabe contemporaine: essai critique,* in which the term-pair *al-ʾaṣāla wal-muʿāṣra* was re-visited. The context of the Israeli-Arab war in June 1967 and the catastrophic defeat of the Arab Armies had a traumatic effect (passim note 26) that not only shattered Arab nationalism´s dreams, but also triggered a second awakening of what we call today: political islam and Salafism (in its combatant forms). This is the compromise (*tawfīq*) that Arkoun has been warning against: The triumph of both neo-orientalism and Muslim orthodoxy. See Khatibi´s three articles that we are going to deal with in this paper: "L'orientalisme désoriente", " penser

climate, in which the critical mind has given concessions to nationalism and religion. Similar concessions had been made earlier to nationalism and religious fundamentalism and led to the failure of Nahda project. Concessions were, in fact, the result of colonialism and anti-colonial sentiments together that derailed the second generation of *Nahḍa* from its initial course:

> On the Muslim side, it should be noted, first of all, that if we neglect the alluring fundamentalist discourse that despite having a great mobilizing force, it is devoid of any scientific merit, the real animators of the debate are very few.[36] (Arkoun, 1985:92)

I have noticed, after many years of teaching Islamic and Jewish studies[37], that contemporary Western and Muslim scholarship on Islamic Studies - Qurʾānic Studies, or Biblical Studies, hardly mention Khatibi and Benslama[38], despite the fact that they have been prominent animators of critical debate about the need or " a new language of theoretical critique" that constantly seeks to overcome the given grounds of opposition and open up a space of translation: a place of hybridity,"(Bhabha, 2004:37) a kind of liminal site. Khatibi in *le chercheur critique* gives another definition[39] of the qualifier *critique* - as part and parcel of the new language of theoretical critique:

> First! Let's deal with this problem of vocabulary, the term 'critical´, before going any further. As we know, there is in this notion, the idea of putting in crisis (*mise en crise*) - which is

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autre" and "décoloniser la sociologie". Equally important is Khatibi´s critique of Laroui´s historicism which he describes as a theological artifice dressed in an ideological form." (Khatibi 2002 103)

[36] Arkoun, 1985: 92:"Du côté musulman, il convient de noter, en premier lieu, que si l´on néglige le discours fondamentaliste doué d'une grande force mobilisatrice, mais dénué de pertinence scientifique, les animateurs du débat sont en nombre très réduit."

[37] I remember vividly, since the event that I am relating here represents a turning point for many of my students, the first post-graduate class that I taught in Islamic Studies. The course was *Islam in the 20th & 21st centuries.* Everybody was expecting a course on fundamentalism, terrorism, but to their surprise I proposed the following topic: *Modern Critical Thought in Arab-Islamic Studies.* Some of the students suffered under what I have called here the *curse of affiliations: Was Arkoun a Muslim? That is a believer? To them he was not! Unintentionally, they were re-iterating the same accusations that Muslim orthodoxy has been raising against the free thinkers.* Most of them they have learned how to de-construct the theologically based conception of the term *muslim* and *islam*. Some of those students were Muslims who proved to be promising scholars. Two of them are contributors in this special issue.

[38] I would like to draw the reader´s attention to two works of Benslama in particular: *La psychanalyse à l´épreuve de l´islam.* Paris: Flammarion translated into English by Robert Bononno, *Psychoanalysis and the Challenge of Islam* (2009), and *la guerre des subjectivités en islam*. Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Lignes.

[39] Passim note 18.

> often forgotten. Critique means putting both *itself* and the *object under investigation* in crisis at the same time.[40] (Khatibi, 2002:319).

Decolonising: thought-other

Three of Khatibi´s articles - written in the period between 1976 to 1981- are of special importance to us here, " L´orientalisme désorienté"[41](1976) "décolonisation de la sociologie" (de-

[40] "D'abord un problème de lexique, le mot <critique> avant d'aller plus loin, il y´a en le sait. dans cette notion, l´idée souvent oubliée d'une mise en crise. La critique comme mise en crise á la fois d'elle même et de l'objet dont elle s'occupe...En ce sens aussi, la critique est double: critique de sa loi intrinsèque, et celle de la loi sociétale." Khatibi, A. Le chercheur critique, Chemins de traverse: essais de sociologie (Rabat: Université de Muḥammad V – Souissi 2002) 319.

[41] Khatibi, A. L´orientalisme dérioenté, in Abdelkébir Khatibi, *Chemins de traverse: essais de sociologie* (Rabat: Université de Muḥammad V –Souissi 2002) p.74. This text was published under the title "Jacques Berque ou la saveur orientalé" (Jacques Berque or the oriental Flavour), in *Les Temps Modernes* (Paris: June 1976). It was published under the current title in Maghreb Pluriel (Paris: Denoël) 1983:113-145. Khatibi warns his reader that his article on Berque does not imply directly that "Berque is a legitimate heir to the colonial ideology and to its sociologie musulmane under the protecting eye of the "saint" Collège de France." As a matter of fact, Berque is considered a "theoretician" of de-colonisation. Khatibi´s analysis of Berque´s discourse on Arabs shows how Berque has invented "his arabs", who comes "directly from metaphysics in the heideggerian sense of onto-theo-logy." (Khatibi 2002: 71) Unlike Said's work *Orientalism*, which is considered a seminal work in postcolonial studies, few people have actually paid attention to this work of Khatibi on French Orientalism in the Anglo-Saxon world of Academia. (Lionnet, 2011; Gronemann, 2009) Various reasons have been proposed as why such a universal thinker (theoretician, writer, philosopher, sociologist, poet, playwright, political activist, academician) have not been recognised! As we know all of Khatibi´s works are authored in French. Apart from few works, almost all of his works have not been translated into English. On the issue of Maghrebin studies in French see Edward Burke III "Theorising the Histories of Colonialism and Nationalism in the Arab Maghreb" (Burke III, 2009: 17-34). Daniel Martin Varisco´s omission of and silence about Khatibi´s work from his list of critiques by Muslim and Arab scholars before Said's Orientalism is very surprising, to say the least. In a recent e-mail addressed to me, Varisco wrote: "Joshua, Oxford wanted a minimum of non-English references, unfortunately. Thus many valuable references had to be left out." It is even more surprising that someone like Hišām Ṣāliḥ ignores the seminal work of Khatibi on French Orientalism in an edited work in Arabic on Orientalism (Arkoun, 2011) *al-ʾistišrāq bayna duʿātihi wa muʿāriḍīh* (Orientalism between its proponents and opponents) which translates a number of articles of both proponents and opponents of Orientalism. He presents a narrative consisting of two moments which he calls: Anwar Abdel Malek´s moment: "L´Orientalisme en crise" (Orientalism in Crisis), in Diogéne 1963), and Said's moment: Orientalism in 1978. One thing is sure is that Ṣāliḥ tries to define that something else (see the note 31) that causes the orientalist discourse to become more defensive and apologetic under the attacks of these new native intellectuals. I am very glad to see the renewed interests that some postcolonial scholars in Khatibi´s works: Mahmut Mutman recognises this postcolonial gesture (in English language) that took

colonisation of sociology), and "pensée-autre (thought - other). The last two were published in 1981. In these seminal articles, Khatibi presents three critical concepts, constitutive of the theory of double critique, and operative in its critical language (bilingualism): *orientalism, decolonisation* and *otherness*. Prior to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Khatibi published in 1976 the article "L´orientalisme désoriente" (orientalism disorientates), and in which he dealt with French Orientalists: Louis Massignon (d. 1962) and Jacque Berque (d. 1995) and through their works he outlines three characteristics of (French) Orientalism on the one hand, and the aims of the orientalist discourse(s) or ideology at work[42], on the other:

1. Orientalism deep-rootedness in the soil of metaphysics: *islam* and *arabness*, which, according to this approach, are defined as "a theological transcendence and a hypostasised history," and as "a high spirituality parallel to a passionate sensuality" respectively. (Khatibi, 2002: 72)
2. Non-contradiction between positivism and spiritualism: " a binding unity between essentialism, positivism and metaphysics. It is remarkable how Khatibi dissects the orientalist narrative on its proper history and the illusion of the unity of its enunciation on its object *orient, arabs, islam.* Using Heidegger's analysis of the *Techniques* as a prerequisite for understanding the position of Orientalism in social sciences, Khatibi unmasks the will to dominate immanent in the Orientalist discourse: "the destiny of the Technique is the same as the destiny of metaphysics, and science presents itself as a supreme simulacrum (will-to-will) of Western domination." (Khatibi, 2002:74) Orientalism in this vein continues its course, loyal to its metaphysical foundations, as if Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Marx, Foucault, Derrida have never existed or spoken. (Ibid)

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place two years before Khatibi´s death in 2009: "As an alternative to Massignon, I follow Gayatri Spivak´s advice and offer the Moroccan psychoanalyst and writer Abdelkébir Khatibi´s fascinating reading of Muḥammad's biography in his essay `frontiers´."(Mutman, 2007:108. See also Mutmam, 2014. Being a trans-textual thinker who weaves in and out of various schools of thought is evident from the "testimonies of debt" that for instance Roland Barthes´ and Jacques Derrida have "confessed" on paper: Barthes title ´"Ce que je dois à Khatibi" (What I owe to Khatibi) (Barthes, 1997:121-123), and Derrida's personal address: "Cher Abdelkébir, vois-tu je me considère ici comme le plus franco-maghrebin de nous deux, et peut être le seul franco maghrebin." (Dear Abdelkébir, I consider myself here as the most franco-maghrebian of us two, perhaps the only franco-maghrebian). (Derrida, 1996: 29)

[42] It should be borne in mind that the issue under scrutiny by "native" critical intellectual is not western scholars' erudition, or their ethno-confessional affiliations, but rather *something-else.* This something-else reveals the following truth: solidarity in opposition: orientalism and fundamentalism as two opposing essentialisms are in solidarity as far as both study-object (islam) and the division of tasks are concerned.

3. Orientalism in its various discursive forms: *Christian, Idealist or Rationalist,* seems to be in" solidarity with humanism, in which theological humanism finds its shelter," after the *scholastic god* in the 19th century withdrew from the western scene, giving up his place to man as the subject of history." (Ibid) The logical conclusion that Khatibi draws from this withdrawal is that Orientalism "recovers this scholastic God with (fr. chez) the Arabs." (Ibid), Orientalism´s "arabs".

Mapping Orientalism's various discourses means according to Khatibi a kind of periodization that consists of two unequal moments within Orientalism itself.[43] Transiting from one moment to another is marked by a break (fr. ébranlement):

1. Classical orientalism: stretching from the 12th century to the Second World War. This period-moment is marked by philology, historiography and culturalism (ethnography).
2. Post-World-War-II orientalism: This type of orientalism has become, according Khatibi, inserted within the field of social sciences. Although French Orientalism began to "open up for, inter alia, structural analysis, semiology and Marxism, the trial of this body of knowledge was done on the basis of Orientalism´s metaphysical foundations." (Khatibi, 2002:73)

Khatibi attends attentively to the second period of Orientalism, specifically to French Orientalism, and, more precisely to this institutional Orientalism - College de France - represented in its two orientalists: Massignon and Berque. Two points about this institutional orientalist discourse about these two categories: *islam* and *arabs* should be retained here:
Massignon´s eschatological discourse on *islam,* which he depicts as religion of faith, shall save the Abrahamic humanity after the failure of both Christianity and Judaism because "Christianity has deviated from the inaugural truth, and has forgotten its prophetic mission by

[43] Khatibi speaks of two periods, historically speaking, of Orientalism. This should not be conflated with any kind of typology or taxonomy of Orientalism, nor should we infer from Khatibi´s periodization any kind of Manichean definition: "good"/"bad" Orientalism. Khatibi´s choice of the 13th century as a point of departure finds its explanation in the fact that the first chairs of oriental languages began in the West in 1225 after the decision of council of Vienna. The term "orientalist", however, appeared at the end of the 18th century. One finds an echo of this discussion about Western Islamic and Arabic Studies in an intra-orientalist discussion, to which Rodinson makes allusion, a kind of discourse on discourse. Rodinson's historicizing approach to the phenomenon of orientalism - dialectic of historical reality and thought - renders him a proponent of a discourse on methodology against other discourses within orientalism. Rodinson Marxist theory on orientalism has contributed to a taxonomy – hierarchized typology) of various orientalists discourses. (Rodinson, 1974)

covering over the colonialist crime. Judaism has been misled by Zionism." (Khatibi, 2002:74). Khatibi concludes that "Massignon´s Abrahamic Allāh maintains the speech of the humble and the dominated," (Ibid) and for that reason, Massignon proposes "his grand reconciliation of the three religions" (Ibid).

The task of double critique transcends all sorts of essentialising polemics and engage through critical language - and as such it is always bilingual[44] - an act of *de-colonisation* / re-appropriation- which should not be mistaken for *negation* (as I have mentioned earlier), or a revival of a repressed *authenticity; a lost book,* but rather as an act of *negotiation* which consists of:

1. "A deconstruction of logo-centrism and ethnocentrism. That is "a need to ponder on the structural solidarity between imperialism in all its forms and the expansion of social sciences." (Ibid)
2. "A necessary critique of knowledge and discourses that various societies of the Arab world have elaborated on themselves." (Ibid)

Exercising double critique relentlessly means a) unveiling the impact of producing a body of knowledge on the world (Orient) by social sciences that is conceived and developed in the West at the very moment the latter is exercising its imperialist hegemony on the world through the expansion of industry, and b) unmasking the sites wherein contemporary Arab knowledge "need to *radically break* with its theological and theocratic foundations that mark the ideology of islam and of all monotheisms." (Ibid). The task at hand is "to localise the *sites* where a such knowledge is *an ideological adaptation* of metaphysical concepts." (Ibid)! Remarkably, Khatibi does not exempt

[44] Khatibi asks this pertinent question vis-à-vis the dichotomy West/East, and which defines his notion of bilingual identity: "Shall we reject Europe and distance ourselves from it for good? Wouldn't that be an illusion, for the simple reason that Europe resides in us? Know that the Arab´s problem – in its extreme form – we believe, is a west, whose difference is difficult to deal with … if the west is in us- not as an absolute entity [metaphysical idea], but as a difference that we are able to compare to another difference." (Khatibi 2000: 30. In his second auto-biography, Khatibi speaks of the `self´ as a mask of `alterity´: "On the way to ourselves [us], we may say: I or: me, I, if one is in the state of listening to one´s subconscious. The self is neither hateful nor adorable. It is a unique mask of alterity" (Khatibi, 2008:8). Khatibi uses also the term of bilingualism to describe the dynamic character of identity. In post-colonial theory, similar concepts have been proposed for the non-essentialist view of identity such as hybridity (Bhabha), mapping (Deleuze & Guattari), mestizaje [crossbreeding] (Anazaldua), interstitially and hyphenation (Misha), critical identities (Král). Today, it is difficult to "apprehend identity independently of identity construction and the mechanisms it involves" (Král, 2009: 2).

Arab Marxist[45] sociology from playing, as it were, this game of ideological adaptation. Where does this *radically breaking* leave contemporary Arab knowledge then? Does it necessarily mean that it ceases to be *being* Arab-Islamic? Or does it mean that once it breaks away (from whatever and wherever it is imagined to be belonging to) it becomes Western[46]? No! It simply means that the structure of contemporary Arab thought experiences " a conflictual interference of two different types of *episteme*: The Western episteme covers the other." Furthermore, and in order to understand fully the position that contemporary Arab-Islamic thought is in a state of subordination to the Western thought - Khatibi goes beyond what traditionally is articulated in the dichotomy of a 'West' versus an 'Orient'. Double critique entails *opposing* to Western episteme its *unthought of/ its* outside (fr. dehors) while radicalising the margin, "not only in *thought in Arabic, but in thought-other* which speaks in *languages, and listening to all thoughts irrespective from where they comes from,"* (Ibid) *Maṭrūz Thought.*

In light of what Khatibi calls *pensée-autre* (thought - other) that speaks and listen to all thoughts, double critique breaks away from all sorts of foundationalist discourses: Salafi, Liberal, classical Marxism, reformist etc. since they are still trapped within or moulded by the theological and theocratic foundations on the one hand, and the ideological adaptation of metaphysical concepts on the other.

Freud and the question of origin

Asking the question about the *origin of islam* does not escape a historiography of *the vantage point* and *how* this origin is imagined. Needless to go through all the polemics around this imagined origin, but instead we would like to be a bit more attentive to how this question of origin being re-casted by Khatibi. Re-casted means, here, how Khatibi re-iterates the question of origin through a dialogue with Freud´s psychoanalytical enunciation, which Benslama describes as "an incident remark." (Benslama, 2002:117):

[45] "C´est pourqoui cette pensée-autre dont nous réclamons n´est ni marxiste dans le sens strict, ni antimarxiste dans le sens droitier de ce terme, mais aux limites de ses possibilités. Car nous voulons décentrer en nous le savoir occidental, nous dé-centrer par rapport à ce centre." (This is why this thought-other which we claim is neither Marxist in the narrow sense, nor anti-Marxist in the right-wing sense of the term, but the limits of its possibilities. It is because we want to de-centre in us the Western knowledge, and de-centre ourselves in relation to this centre" (Khatibi 2002 117).

[46] Laroui in his conclusion, which is in my view, could be interpreted as is in line with the very essence of what double critique does - applies to refusing Arab Culture as well: "The refusal of Western culture does not in itself constitute a culture, and the delirious roaming around the *lost self* shall never stir it up from dust" (Laroui, 1967).

> I regretfully have to admit that I cannot give more than one sample that I have not the expert knowledge necessary to complete the investigation. This limited knowledge will allow me perhaps to add that the founding of the Muḥammadan religion seems to me to be an abbreviated repetition (*abgekürzte Wiederholung*) of the Jewish one, in imitation (*Nachahmung*) of which it made its appearance. There is reason to believe that the Prophet originally intended to accept the Jewish religion in full for himself and his people. The regaining (*wiedergewinnung*) of the one great primeval Father (*urvater*) produced in the Arabs an extraordinary advance in self confidence which led them to great worldly success, but which, it is true, exhausted itself in these. Allah proved himself to be much more grateful to his chosen people than *Jahve* had in his time. The inner development of the new religion, however, soon came to a standstill, perhaps because it lacked the profundity, which in Jewish religion resulted from the murder of its founder. (Freud, 1939: 148-149)

Khatibi´s reading of this passage takes different focal positions in an untiring bi-directional movement: reading of Freud, Derrida, Muḥammad´s biography, and Islamic tradition. His aim is to "carry on from where Freud left off in the analysis of monotheism" - not in the sense of an *ideological adaptation* of metaphysical concepts. He crosses, however, the border and back again. He keeps doing this all the time, several times. It is his profession. He puts into question (*mise en crise*) a theory - his own - to deconstruct the orientalist discourse latent in Freud´s enunciation, and in doing so, double critique re-appropriates – neither *mimesis nor repetition of* - Freud´s theory of religion and its critical language: its limitations and silence in Freud´s psychoanalysis on islam or in the words of Khatibi "*islam is an empty space in the theory of psychoanalysis.*"(Khatibi, 2009: 689–696)

Fethi Benslama[47], a lacanian psychoanalyst, takes also this short Freudian passage - the only passage [48]- on islam or rather the issues of

[47] Fethi Benslama is a Franco-Tunisian psychoanalyst and an engaged intellectual. Together with Khatibi, they led a research programme: "raison and un-reason in Islam" un programme de recherche intitulé « Raison et déraison en islam ».

[48] Worth mentioning, the Freud mentions the Arabs in another passage Moses and Monotheism. on the origin of the israelite Jewish god Jahve he quotes Eduard Meyer Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme: Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen (Halle: Verlag von Max Niemeyer 1906) pp. 60-71, saying: "The second fact, proved by E. Meyer, is that these Jews on their return from Egypt united with tribes nearly related to them, in the country bordering on Palestine, the Sinai peninsula and Arabia, and that there, in a fertile spot called Qades, they accepted under the influence of the Arabian Midianites a new religion, the worship of the volcano God Jahve." Moses and Monotheism, p. 98. Cf. Meyer E. Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme:

origin *of* islam and *in* islam, especially its constitutive text the Qurʾān, and the fiction of Abraham/Ishmael genealogy; the figure of the father in Biblical and Qurʾānic archives[49]. Both Khatibi and Benslama recognise, as I do, the temporality of Freud´s theory - as it is enunciated under the subheading of *difficulties.* It is not a declaration of *non-jurisdiction,* but of a reading of his days´ orientalist imagined islam as an *imitation* of Judaism[50] - which we today see its limitations - and a displacement of that body of knowledge: a new theory of religion with regard to the central position of the *urvater* and its appropriation and translation in islam. Khatibi accepts, as it were, Freud´s text of islam as an invitation – from a professional outsider to another, of scrutiny of the pre-second world war´s Western body of knowledge on islam and the Orient. Now let us see how Khatibi re-reads himself, his own exile, and displacement into Freud´s. Both of them are professional outsiders.[51] Speaking of Freud, Khatibi reads him as *thought-other*:

> Freud then transforms this margin, this frontier, into a working laboratory. With this move, this professional outsider displaced the notion of an anthropological ground upon which individuals and their properties, peoples and their memory are inscribed. He displaced thought in displacing himself – this, in fact, is the task of the professional outsider. A professional outsider, separated from his mythical origin. Precisely like Moses. (Khatibi, 2009:689)

Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen (Halle: Verlag von Max Niemeyer 1906) pp. 60-71.

[49] Beslama F. La Psychanalyse à l´épreuve de l´Islam (Paris: Flammarion 2002).

[50] The term of day in those days - still in polemical literature - borrowing. Two hypotheses were advanced in orientalist discourse: the Jewish and/or the Christian origin of Islam. According Benslama "Freud quote was based on precise information gleaned from non-cited references." On Jewish and Christian origin of Islam see for instance Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Muḥammad aus dem Judenthume Aufgenommen*? (Bonn: Gedruckt auf Kosten des Verfassers bei F. Baaden 1833); and Richard Bell, *Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environment* (Edinburgh: The Gunning Lectures Edinburgh University, 1925). The conclusion of these origin-fixed enunciations is that Islam has no proper origin.

[51] In his second autobiography Le Scribe et son Ombre ("The Scribe and his Shadow"), Khatibi describes this notion of "the professional outsider" in this way: "It happens that I introduce myself as Moroccan and as professional stranger …as the character of my last work said:
`…He is a professional outsider´, he said
`Funny trade! ´
`It is not a trade. It is a mobile position in the world. One is able to cross borders: between languages, civilisations and markets. One day, one stops to meditate. ´
`You are still there, Amigo! She said
` Yes, Yes, always! When they look for me, they'll find on the road, the hand on my heart. ´" (Khatibi, 2008:15)

Now, how does Khatibi proceed? How in his exile - critical thought is always exilic - separates himself from his mythical origin[52]. Muḥammad - the prophet of islam in Islamic tradition - is "*the orphan of the book and the one who was not killed by his fellows and enemies"*.[53] Beyond the various accounts codified in Islamic tradition about Muḥammad's biography: birth, childhood, maturity, before and after Revelation, Khatibi distinguishes between Muḥammad of the "family romance" and Muḥammad - the prophet - *the orphan of the book*. Muḥammad in "family romance": childhood is characterized, in Freudian terms, by *substitution* and *duplication*. Muḥammad's lost father - Abdullah - is substituted by his grandfather - ʿAbdul Muṭṭalib - and Halima (wet nurse) is his mother´s - Amina - duplicate, whereas Muḥammad the prophet whose prophecy is "of *orphanage of the lost book*[54] through which the prophet sacrifices his signature."(Ibid.691)

Interestingly, Revelation and its modi, as reported by Muḥammad´s biographers are read as "Ordeal of the Book and its script." Revelation´s modi and states: "dreaming", "while awake", and "form and figure of an apparition" - that of the Angel that "speaks." The order of the Angel to Muḥammad to *ʾiqraʾ* is understood according Khatibi as *recite!*[55], that is "read[ing the message] without understanding it." It is a *di-phonic* self-recitation: "reciting to himself through two separate voices that unite to convey the same message". In a symmetrical and circular logic, Allāh as addressor is the "other voice of Muḥammad", whereas the "initial addressee is the prophet." What does it mean reciting/reading without understanding here? I would say, the question intentionally, goes beyond, without ignoring its polemical and erudite history and implications, the issue of Muḥammad "family romance", and whether he knew how to read and write. It reformulates the question in terms of legibility and illegibility of the message. Muḥammad in this circular logic "occupies sometimes one place, sometimes another." The prophetic message - is illegible to him, since he inhabits it, but it is legible to his wife Ḫadīja:

> From the modesty of Gabriel to the reassuring gentleness of Khadija, the word took body. The wife deciphered certain signs

[52] Cf. Derrida, J. Abraham, l´autre, in Le dernier des Juifs, (Paris: Galilée 2014) pp.69-126.

[53] Islam is an orphan religion in comparison with Freud´s description in Moses and Monotheism: "The Mosaic religion has been a father religion, and Christianity religion became a Son religion." p. 141.

[54] The lost book that Khatibi refers to is to Freud´s "secret book", which he mentioned in his correspondence with Arnold Zweig in 1939: "I am waiting for nothing other than Moses who has yet to appear as sure as night follows day, after which I shall no longer need to be interested in any book of mine until my next rebirth" (Khatibi, 2009:690). Khatibi´s notion of the lost book goes beyond the Bible of Freud. Cf. Derrida, 1995

[55] Q. 96:1. The verb *ʾiqraʾ* in imperative, translated here as *recite!*, has been a focal point for several interpretations.

> of prophecy on her own body and on that of her husband. She read, in a way, on the imaginary body of Islām where, illegible to Mohammad himself, the prophetic message becomes apprehensible by the feminine body. (Burcu Yalim, 1988)[56]

This is what Khatibi calls *identification* and *separation*. Muḥammad the prophet "*identifies himself* with the message and the Book[57] that was written by No-one." Separation, however, is "between the legible and the illegible, the voice and the writing, the visible and the invisible, between the white signature [that of Allāh] and the sacrifice of the name [that of Muḥammad], the survival and the transfiguration of the name." The very notion of Revelation/revelation (*waḥy*) becomes in Khatibi´s reading a gesture of trespassing he impossible! Desacralizing the notion of Revelation that Khatibi undertakes here brings to the fore what Arkoun, in his diagnosis of the sacralising reading of the Qurʾān, the thing that has been kept out of sight. That is "the *impossible-to-think-of* " since the 11th century: the notion of Revelation. (Arkoun, 2001:12) It is in this vein, that Khatibi calls upon Freud's gesture of desacralisation[58] to undertake his own desacralizing of this *impossible-to-think-of;* "destabilisation of all notions of religion, of monotheism and of the Book." (Khatibi, 2009:690) Revelation in the case of Muḥammad the prophet becomes in his insertion in "a symbolic genealogy much richer than that of the

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[56] Cited in Khatibi, 2009: 692

[57] On the notion of the book/Book: kitāb/al-kitāb in what traditionally is called western and Muslim Qur'ānic scholarship see (Madigan 2001). Interestingly, Madigan´s erudite presentation of the scholarly debate oscillates between modern western scholars and classical Muslim scholars. While maintaining both scholarships separate, Madigan re-iterates - mimically - the orientalist discourse on Islam as a modernist discourse on pre-modern object. The modern Muslim scholarship on Qur'ānic studies is "enunciated as non-existent". There is a huge epistemological and ideological difference between not mentioned and enunciated as non-existent. Nevertheless, Madigan´s discussion of the notion of kitāb/al-kitāb, particularly Bell´s differentiation between the Qur'ānas *document* and the Qur'ān as a *source* is interesting. Regarding contemporary Arab-Islamic scholarship on the Qur'ān see for instance Nasr Abu Zayd, *mafhūm al-naṣṣ* (the meaning of the text), Muḥammad Arkoun: *al-qurʾān: min al-tafsīr al-mawrūṯ ʾilā taḥlīl al-ḫiṭāb al-dīnī* (The Qur´an: from the inherited exegesis to the analysis of the religious discourse), Tayyeb Tizini *al-naṣṣ al-qurʾānī ʾamām ʾškāliyat al-binya wal-qirāʾa* (the Qur'ānic text :the problematic of structure and reading), Ābed al-Ğābrī's four books: 1. an introduction: *madḫl ilā al-qurʾān al-karīm* (an introduction to the noble Qur'ān), 2. a *tafsīr* trilogy: *fahm al-qurʾān al-ḥakīm: al-tafsīr al-wāḍiḥ ḥasab tartīb al-nuzūl* (comprehending the wise Qur'ān: the clear commentary according to the order of revelation), Khatibi "sexualité selon le coran" ("sexuality according the Qur'ān"). This is not an exhaustive list, but few titles of a serious scholarship in the debate about the Qur'ānic text.

[58] Khatibi (2009:690) through the other demoralising gesture - an act of rationalisation, duplicates Freud´ enunciative I/he: "But instead of reconciling himself with his god, like the Oedipus of Sophocles, he destroys all divine illusions, all religious illusions, and treats them as a symptom of neurosis." (Khatibi, 2009:690)

family romance." (Ibid. 691) Reading this separation, these two genealogies, Muḥammad "*reveals himself* to himself, and to his relatives as the *new* new testament." Khatibi construes revelation - prophetic message - as *socially radical*. Revealing himself to himself and to his relatives Muḥammad fought, adds Khatibi, against three figures: *the seer* (*kāhin*), *the possessed* (*majnūn*), and *the poet* (*šāʿir*)[59]. This three figures in Q 52:30 - as in the Qur´an´s re-iteration of the accusation that Muḥammad´s opponents - become social actants in this double gestures of revelation against whom the prophetic message is radical:

> The first belongs to a pagan genealogy and to its magic; the second, to its haunted margin and the third, to the act of tribal imagination. Mohammad destroys the pre-Islamic statues in order to appear to the world as the messenger (Rassoul) of 'the One-Only'. (Khatibi, 2009: 691)

How this business of Muḥammad being *the orphan of the book* should be taken? First Khatibi re-visits the concept of the *palimpsest*. Here Khatibi offers us two different relational mudi of texts: the *palimpsestuous*[60] and the *translational*. It is a site - a *frontier* -

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[59] Q. 52:30-31: "Therefore, continue to remind, for by the grace of your Lord, you are not a soothsayer, or madman, or do they say: A poet, we wait for him the evil of the time." (Shakir´s translation), See also Q. 68:2; 81:22; 69:41-42. With regard to magicians and poets as antithesis to divine miracle and revelation see Q. 26.
Benslama refers to the repudiated Hagar, mother of Ishmael as the first person to call the god who spoke to her and named the yet to be born child *yišmāʿēl* (Ishmael), now her god, as god-seeing-me (heb. *ʾēl roʾī*). By the same token she became the one who saw god as he saw her, even the well was called *beʾēr laḥay roʾī* (the well of the living one who sees me)(Gen. 16:11-14). Benslama mentions also that Spinoza considered Hagar a prophet. We should bear in mind that Hagar is not mentioned in Qurʾānic archive. As for the biblical figure, the Midianite Jethro, one his three biblical names, a name of his profession as a priest (Ex.3:1, *kohēn midyān*): Ex. 2:18, *reʿūʾēl* (friend of god). In the Semitic "family romance", the one that Freud uses, and which both Khatibi and Beslaman make reference to, the god (jahve) that the *Israelite* "borrowed" from the Midianites (Ishmaelites/Arabs).
On this very important point, Arkoun asks the following question: "Why does the issue of the attitude of the associationists (*mušrikūn*) vis-à-vis the phenomenon of revelation (*waḥy*) constitute one of the strategic domains that needs to be studied if the intention be founding a new and creative thought concerning the significance of religions and its meaning? Using the historical approach shall typify the query as an anthropological question vis-à-vis the emergence of the religious language and its function" (Arkoun 2001:93). Arkoun and Khatibi, as well as Benslama, were aware of the limitations of the historical investigation. Reducing the issue to historical-textual criticism alone - that is to description of the events, names, identities, literary sources, origins of ideas and their genealogy - will simply not do.
[60] On this term and history and various applications in Genette´s poetics see Gerald Prince´s "Foreword" to the English translation of Gérard Genette book: Palimpsest: Literature in the Second Degree (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1997), pp. IX-XI.

"between different messages of monotheism".[61] The One - unicity of Allāh and Arabic language - designates what Khatibi calls the "founding signature"[62] of the orphan book "in the Islamic imaginary.[63]" In this frontier, a kind of pentecostal-like event takes place. This time, however, it is god who "changes language, the parabolic and the allegorical code,"[64] in a hierarchy that stratifies the possible and the impossible. The possible: the *game of palimpsest* that presupposes "a book and its duplications, a testament which would be the origin with its copies."[65]Khatibi does not deny its existence, but allocates to it a status and a set of functions: the oral, the written and symbolic levels - the inside. It is limited by the translational - trans-cross-frontierial - "where the *lost book is precisely of the impossible origin.*[66]"It is the outside. Between the inside and the outside lies the question of borrowing. The origin, says Khatibi becomes the "mythical account of borrowings."[67]

In Jewish, Christian and Muslim narratives of abrogation - actually it is called the doctrine of abrogation - abrogation is postulated as retrospectively external, and circular-internally. It is a matter of law, continuity and discontinuity (negation). Khatibi calls this phenomenon cross-repression: Old Testament, New Testament, and Qur´an. In order to deconstruct this narrative of election of the "saved community", Khatibi through double critique, de-sacralises the mythical account of borrowing by depositing the following hypothesis: The lost book of monotheism is the *split book: a Book without origin.* Khatibi let Freud do the work first, and he carries on from where Freud stops. It is like writing with two hands. This is done through "a systematic reading of desacralisation". When Khatibi says that Freud de-sacralises, he means that he rationalises. What does Freud´s decentralising /rationalising consist of? It is when Freud divides the One into two or multiple ones. For instance Freud deposits a narrative with three duplicates:

1. Moses the Egyptian is killed in order for the mythical founder to emerge.
2. Christ who "would in fact be a murderer who disguised himself in the angelic costume of a Redeemer, of a false victim."[68]
3. Muḥammadan religion the foundation of which "seems to be an abbreviated repetition of the Jewish one, in imitation of which it made its appearance."

[61] Khatibi, 2009:692.
[62] Khatibi, ibid.
[63] Khatibi, ibid.
[64] Khatibi ibid.
[65] Khatibi ibid.
[66] Khatibi ibid.
[67] Khatibi ibid.
[68] Khatibi ibid

Regarding the third duplicate, Khatibi seems to be at work again. Why an abbreviated repetition? Khatibi´s measured answer is an expression of a calculated gesture that restrains from falling into narcissism of the victim – back to the curse of affiliations whether religious or nationalistic. An imitation? Yes, but one that "lacks the murder of the father, whose postulates is crucial to Freudian analysis". Benslama sees in Freud´s "incident remark" an attempt to rethink *origin* and "a *plurality of emergences* and a *resurgence of the same trace* across time." (Benslama, 2002:117)

Khatibi´s hypothesis of *Muḥammad as the orphan book of monotheism* draws Muḥammad´s "family romance" in which he is an orphan, and on prophecy according to which Muḥammad sacrifices his signature. He has a book of his own. He is the Book: He recites himself to himself. Allāh has no signature; or rather his signature is white with no trace. Muḥammad was not killed by his people, or was he? Should he be killed in order for his mythical duplicate to arise, as was the case with Moses the Egyptian[69]? He *sacrificed his signature, his book.*

As to the Freudian concepts of *repetition, abbreviated repetition, and imitation* Benslama offers other explanations. Since repetition is "neither *reproduction nor rumination,"* what is it then? He presents two definitions / registers of this psychoanalytical phenomenon:

1. On the symbolic level: the principle of language use dictates the same signs. In the case that the same produces new meanings, then one can conclude that repetition produces difference.
2. On the level of what is impossible to symbolise: In the case for instance of traumatism, repetition serves as tool with which one controls trauma. "It is in this case a vain attempt to come in terms with the return of the same." (Benslama, 2002:116)
3. On the term *imitation,* Benslama recognises the fact Freud used it in conformity with the orientalist thesis about the Jewish origin of islam. The idea of *imitation* denotes in the orientalist archive, an unlawful takeover and a mimicry that hides fraud, whence the palimpsestuous concept of an origin and a copy. In the Qurʾān's polemical discourse, returning Abraham is an act of Islām´s re-founding its self as the true monotheism linking its origin with the sealing end.

One should also consider the significance of Freud´s portrayal of Arabs ´double role (being a lender and a borrower): the Arabs lent their god *Jahve* to the Israelites at the time of Moses and being a borrower at the time of Muḥammad. In this cycle of borrowing and

[69] Derrida discusses the issue of whether Moses was threatened to be killed or was actually killed in the wilderness according to Bible and Midrash archives: Numbers 14:10. (Derrida, 1995:43-44). In Islamic biographies of Muḥammad, several attempts to kill Muḥammad were made by *his people.*

lending, one cannot speak of an origin, but of multiple emergences and resurgence of the same trace across time; in other words, *origins.*

In conclusion, Khatibi´s reading of Freud´s passage as a an exilic text on islam being "an abbreviated repetition" shows intimately how double critique re-creates its critical language by exposing it to an inside and an outside reading in a weaving movement. Does Khatibi try to psychoanalyse islam or islamicise psychoanalysis? A legitimate question I would say? A question that perhaps only border police would ask:

> For precisely these reasons, it is not, as I understand it, a question of psychoanalysing islam, nor of islamicising psychoanalysis, even less of judaising or hinduising it, but of exercising it as frontierial position in the language and exercise of a profession. (Khatibi, 2009:696)

Conclusion

In this paper/essay, I have shown how a double critic thinks, works, and navigates through theories, bodies of knowledge in reflexive manner. Double critical thought enjoys an unprecedented openness. It gets its force from scientific rationally that is in action in a world of conflict and contradictions, challenging different strategic, economic, political, ideological, and cultural models.

Khatibi´s double critique paradigm is a theory of theory (meta-theory) and a bi-directional exercise; a theory of de-centering centres and an exercise of de-centering the self as centre. A general theory, as we have seen, concerning how Khatibi for instance postulates the issue of origin an epistemological question and as discourse of difference, of transtextuality and transition. The issue of origin, all origins are narratives as mythical accounts of borrowing, upon which double critique builds its own narrative of fictionality, archive and memory. For example De-centering the Qurʾānic accounts of the origin is first of all a de-sacralisation of any reading as centre reading, including its own.

Author biography

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Ehab Galal (ed.): Arab TV-Audiences. Negotiating Religion and Identity. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014.

In the wake of the Arab uprisings many praised the social media for their decisive role in the uprisings. Others argued that it was the impact of satellite channels over decades which finally led to democratization. While all these accounts certainly have a degree of validity they also have shortcomings. First, these studies take for granted that the technology that would allow a free flow of information in the social media is in place. But as a recent report from the World Bank (2014) points out there are important gaps within countries exacerbating the (digital) divide between rural and urban areas. Second, much of the media studies related to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) until now are media-centric and tend to focus on the political economy of the satellite channels or their possible contribution to a democratization process. Third, and maybe most importantly, very little attention has been paid to how the Arab audiences actually use the satellite media and what sense they make of the programs. It is this gap in media studies and, more specific, studies of religious programming related to an Arab context that the book *Arab TV-Audiences. Negotiating Religion and Identity* fills.

After a thorough review of the development of Arab satellite channels and a useful grouping of the various religious programmes Galal elegantly arrives at the presentation of the main question examined in the book: 'who are the Arab audiences?', and 'How do they navigate and make sense of the abundance of symbolic resources offered by the diverse range of competing programmes and genres'. These questions are addressed in six very different but yet complementing chapters presenting aspects of mediated religion 'as it is transnationally and globally practiced and consumed by Arab-speaking audiences' (p. 7).

The first chapter by Galal himself examines the construction, negotiation and rejection of religious identity and practises based on media ethnography carried out in Copenhagen, London and Cairo. The methodological approach is in itself refreshing in MENA studies as Galal lets the interviewees express their opinion through the use of direct quotes. Galal concludes that satellite programmes are perceived both as a 'protector of tradition and as a basis for making up one's own mind about religious issues' (p. 43). Chapter 2 and 4 focus on Arab audiences outside an Arab geographic context: Khalil Rinnawi analyses Arab audiences in Berlin while Noah Mellor's

interviewees are based in London. Rinnawi discusses what he labels a 'back to Islam' through media consumption and concludes that the elder generation experiences a practical 'back to Islam' while the younger generation focus more on emotional aspects. In the same vein Mellor discover a generational difference in the use and perception of religious media and its contribution to a reproduction of the cultural identity of the second generation Arabs in London. Chapter 3 by Ratiba Hadj-Moussa follows up on the theme of 'belonging' but does so in a Maghrebi context. As Galal Hadj-Moussa applies a media-ethnographic approach. The understudied issue of connexion to a broader Arab context and identity by the Maghrebis is her focus, and she concludes that 'Arab satellites television reaffirms Maghrebi audiences' affiliation to their Arabic roots and culture' (p. 90). Chapter 5 and 6 shift religious focus and analyses Copts' use of religious media. Vivian Ibrahim explores the perception by Copts in the US and in the Great Britain of an Egyptian Ramadan series introducing viewers to the Muslim Brotherhood. Her analysis demonstrates that the US audience, who has lived longer outside Egypt than the British, is more likely to be critical to the series' argument of a co-existence between Copts and Muslims. Lise Galal analyses 'how Copts use public imaginaries in negotiating identity and belonging' (p. 131) with a point of departure in two films. She discusses the hegemonic discourse presented by the Egyptian state television celebrating a diverse but unified people vis-à-vis the liberalization of media, which led to a new negotiation of diversity and power of definition.

Like Lise Galal all authors demonstrate that changes were underway long before the popular uprisings in 2010-2011 and that it is possible to gain insight into slow changes and feelings of lived lives, identity and belonging which were – among others – driving factors behind the uprisings. As the book clearly demonstrates such insights can stand out through the use of interviews with audiences and through media-ethnography. In this way the book can be of inspiration for future and much needed studies of audiences, people, identity, belonging, the role and perception of religion, slow changes over time and lived lives in an Arab context.

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’Averröes’ fodspor: Samtalen mellem religion og filosofi – Den afgørende diskurs Faṣl- al-Maqāl – Oversat med indledning og noter af Saer el-Jaichi og Joshua A. Sahib. Forlaget Gramma. 2. reviderede udgave. Kbh, 2014.

Bogen ”I Averröes’ fodspor: Samtalen mellem religion og filosofi – Den afgørende diskurs Faṣl- al-Maqāl”, (herefter *DaD*) der er oversat og kommenteret af Saer el-Jaichi og Joshua A. Sahib (herefter J&S) omhandler den muslimsk-andalusiske filosof Averröes’ (1126-1198) opfattelse af forholdet imellem filosofi og religion, særlig således som denne opfattelse kommer til udtryk i *DaD* (fra cirka 1179). Averröes er i den ”vestlige” filosofihistorie primært kendt som den førende kommentator af Aristoteles’ værker i middelalderen. Han er imidlertid også en stor muslimsk tænker, der bl.a. er kendt for sit omfattende modsvar til Al-Ghazalis indflydelsesrige kritik af filosofferne i den muslimske idehistorie. Dette forhold belyses da også i denne udgivelse, der imidlertid også mere generelt vedrører spørgsmålet om, hvordan man kan og bør opfatte forholdet imellem koraneksegese og filosofi. J&S præsenter denne problemstilling på en måde, som giver, hvad man måske kunne kalde en dobbeltåbning af forholdet imellem religion og filosofi, idet deres kommentarer både åbner op for en forståelse af filosofiske udfordringer i Islams idehistorie og samtidig gør dette på en måde, der også åbner for en bredere diskussion af spørgsmålet om forholdet imellem religion og filosofi.

Udgivelsen består af tre hoveddele. Første del, som er den største, består af 5 kapitler. Den giver en introduktion på cirka 100 sider til den idehistoriske og systematiske baggrund for Averröes’ s tekst. Anden del består af kapitel 6, den arabiske tekst til *DaD*, der fylder cirka 60 sider, medens tredje del, kapitel 7, er en kommenteret dansk oversættelse af den arabiske tekst, som ligeledes fylder omkring 60 sider. Da den arabiske tekst er skrevet med noget større typer end den danske oversættelser, er der god plads til en omfattende kommentering af teksten i den danske oversættelse af *DaD*. Der er derudover en kort indledning og en bibliografi.

Averröes var ikke blot filosof, men også dommer og jurist, og det er i denne sammenhæng, at man skal se det forhold, at tekstens indhold udtrykkes som en juridisk fatwa, ”altså en religiøs hensigtserklæring om, hvorvidt det er legitimt at beskæftige sig med filosofi ud fra et koransk synspunkt” (s9). Indledningsvis slår forfatterne fast, at Averröes’ svar på dette spørgsmål kort sagt er, at ikke alene er det legitimt, men at det er en pligt for den religiøse lærde at

sætte sig ind i logik og filosofi. Det rejser selvfølgelig spørgsmålet om, hvordan koraneksegese og filosofisk tænkning er stillet over for hinanden.

Nøglen til at forstå Averröes' svar på dette spørgsmål findes i hans opfattelse af koranen som et flertydigt guddommeligt udsagn, der ud over et bogstaveligt lag også opererer med to yderligere betydningslag. Averröes finder belæg for dette i Sura 16:125, der i J&Ss danske oversættelse af §19 i Averröes' tekst lyder "Kald til din Herres vej med visdom (*al-hikma*) og god formaning (*al-maw'ida al-hasana*), og argumenter med dem på den mest hensigtsmæssige måde *wa ǧādilhum billatī hiya ahsan*)". Det interessante ved dette vers er, dels at Averröes mener, at det "forener stor informativ kraft med et skær af det indlysende […]"(s12) (og dermed forståeligt på alle niveauer), og dels at han knytter det sammen med tre typer af argumentation, som han finder i Aristoteles logiske og sprogfilosofiske værker. Det vil sige at "god formaning" i ovenstående citat ses som knyttet til retorikken, der vedrører den billedmæssige argumentationsform, som forstås af alle; "den mest hensigtsmæssige måde" ses som knyttet til dialektikkens argumentationsform, der på forskellig vis hævder at nå frem til sikkerhed på baggrund af alment accepteret meninger inden for et givet fortolkningsfællesskab, medens "visdom", der er forbeholdt de få, bliver knyttet sammen med begrebet om filosofi, som er tæt forbundet med demonstrativ argumentation.

Med denne pointe i baghovedet kan vi nu vende os til del1, der som sagt består af 5 kapitler, der giver en fin og omfattende baggrundsindføring til *DaD*. De første to kapitler er idehistoriske kapitler, medens de tre næste kapitler er systematisk-filosofiske oversigtskapitler over Averröes' kommentarer til netop de af Aristoteles' logiske og sprogfilosofiske værker, der præsenterer de tre argumentationsformer, og som derfor så at sige indeholder den argumentations-teoretiske baggrund for *DaD.*

J&S giver i kapitel 1 en kort generel introduktion til filosofiens fødsel i den arabiske verden. Der redegøres her for spændinger imellem på den ene side den rationalistiske *Muʿtazila*-teologi og indoptagelse af den græske filosofi, som gik under navnet *falsafah*; og så på den anden side, den del af den teologiske *Kalām*-tradition, der udgik fra al-Ašʿarī; der blev her særlig lagt vægt på efterlevelse af hadith traditionen, samtidig med at man var skeptisk over for brug af rationelle argumenter, som dem *Muʿtazila* stod for. Dette betyder også, at man i den al-Ašʿarī inspirerede teologi i forhold til den religiøs-juridiske tænkning efterhånden begynder at betone analogiargumenter snarere end deduktive argumenter, hvilket igen fører til en adskillelse af den demonstrative videnskab og den religiøse videnskab. Denne

teologiske position bliver efterhånden toneangivende (inden for Sunnī-islam), og det bliver bl.a. derfor vigtigt som modsvar til denne udvikling i *falsafah* at "genforene" islams budskab og filosofien. Således peger for eksempel al-Farabi på, at retorikkens billedsprog kan spille en betydningsfuld rolle i forhold til at overbevise dem, der ikke forstår en mere videnskabelig demonstrativ argumentationsform, uden dog at disse to argumentationsformer kommer i modstrid med hinanden. Der gøres endvidere rede for den spaltning af *falsafa*h, der sker, da Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) introducerer hvad J&S kalder en mere hermeneutisk tilgang til Aristoteles. Dette fører til skellet imellem peripatetikere som al-Kindī og al-Farābī, der så Aristoteles som en ubetinget autoritet og den "østlige filosofi", som startede med Avicenna, og som for en stund blev den dominerende. Forholdet til Aristoteles er hos Avicenna mere fortolkende end den for eksempel er hos al-Kindī, og man kan derfor egentlig tale om to forskellige gengivelser/fortolkninger af Aristoteles i *falsafah*.

I kapitel 2 behandles den specifikt andalusiske kontekst Averröes skriver i, samtidig med at vi får en indføring i Averröes forhold til al-Ġazālī, der er den tænker, næst efter Aristoteles, som Averröes forholder sig mest til. Kapitlet indledes med en kort præsentation af nogle andalusiske tænkere, særlig Avempaces, som foregriber nogle temaer i Averröes tænkning. Herefter følger et mere politisk-idehistorisk afsnit, hvor en central punkt er redegørelsen for, hvorfor Averröes under *mohade*-kaliffen Abu Yaʿqūb gives mulighed for at beskæftige sig med Aristoteles i et dynasti, hvis grundlægger Ibn Tumart var stærkt inspireret af al-Ġazālīs forsoning imellem sufi-mystik og teologi. Denne forsoning indebar nemlig samtidig et stærkt kritisk syn på *falsafah*, særlig således som den kommer til udtryk i Avicennas tænkning. J&S gør her indgående rede for, hvordan Averröes egen tænkning indeholder tre anliggender 1) et opgør med al-Ġazālī-inspireret mystik, 2) rehabiliteringen af Aristoteles' metafysik, som erstatning for den traditionelle islamiske teologi og 3) tilbagevisning af den Avicenna-inspireret Aristoteles-reception (s47). Disse tre punkter hænger internt sammen – al-Ġazālīs kritik af filosofien skyldes ifølge Averröes, at han følger Avicenna og ikke Aristoteles selv. Averröes kan derfor kritisere Avicenna og hans kritiker al-Ġazālī for begge at fejlrepræsentere filosofien og dens forhold til åbenbaringen. De er ikke, som al-Ġazālī hævder, i modstrid med hinanden, men udtrykker i stedet den samme sandhed fra forskellige vinkler. Kapitlet afsluttes med en oversigt over og diskussion af den moderne Averröes reception, hvor der også gøres rede for Averröes parafraserende måde at kommentere

Aristoteles på i de korte kommentartekster.

Man kan i de efterfølgende kapitler 3, 4 og 5 så ved selvsyn netop se eksempler på, hvorledes Averröes kommenterer Aristoteles. Disse kapitler vedrører som sagt diverse oversigter over Averröes kommentarer til nogle af Aristoteles' sprogfilosofiske og logiske tekster, nemlig tekster som Averröes vil mene direkte kan relatere til hans fortolkning af Ṣūra 16:125 angivet ovenfor. Mere specifikt drejer det sig om *Retorikken* og *Poetikken*, (der jo altså så vedrører "formaning"), *Topiken* (der så vedrører dialektikkens "hensigtsmæssige argumentation") og endelig kommentarerne til Aristoteles skrift om *Posterior analytik*, der omhandler udsagn, der kan demonstreres at være sande. På trods af at disse tekster ikke i sig selv umiddelbart vedrører hovedspørgsmålet, altså forholdet imellem filosofi og koranen, så er gennemgangen af dem relevant både som en generel forberedelse til *Dad* og på det mere specifikke niveau, idet forfatterne her påpeger, at *iǧmāʿ* (altså det at etablere konsensus, der traditionelt har at gøre med alment gældende synspunkter, der vedrører religiøse og juridiske vedtægter) ifølge Averröes bliver tæt forbundet med retorikken og dialektikken. Det betyder at konsensus ikke har karakter af demonstrative sandhed, et forhold, der også tematiseres i *Dad*.

Kapitel 6 og 7 er så selve teksten til *Dad* på henholdsvis arabisk og dansk, hvor der til sidstnævnte er givet udførlige kommentarer. *Dad* består af 95 paragraffer og er opdelt i tre hoveddele, "samtalen mellem loven og filosofien", "fortolkningens bestemmelser" og "bevisførelsens metoder", og sluttes af med et appendiks om den "Guddommelige viden". J&S har inddelt disse 95 paragraffer i 27 afsnit, hvor hvert afsnit starter med en tekst, der kort beskriver det pågældende afsnits indhold. Temaerne i teksten er bl.a. nødvendigheden af at lære af også ikke-muslimers videnskabelige filosofiske arv, forholdet imellem forskellige måder at nå frem til den samme sandhed, herunder særlig vigtigheden af skriften (koranens) måder at bruge dialektiske og retoriske argumenter som en mere "folkelig" måde at videregive viden til offentligheden på, hvor den demonstrative argumentationsform er noget vanskeligere at forstå og derfor har et mere esoterisk præg. Averröes diskuterer også det, han ser som al-Ġazālīs misforståelser af forhold i *falsafah* og den græske filosofi. Endelig er det værd at nævne, at J&S også på fin vis gør rede for, hvorledes centrale kategorier som analogislutning, *qiyās* (§22), konsensus *iǧmāʿ* (§28) og omhyggelig tænkning *iǧtihād* (§43), igennem Averröes opfattelse af forholdet imellem koranen og filosofien på forskellig vis forskyder en mere juridisk

tænkemåde i retning af en mere filosofisk orientering på en måde, der har potentielt vidtgående implikationer.

Samlet set må man sige, at J&S giver en glimrede indføring i en kompleks tekst. Fremstillingen bærer præg af, at forfatterne har et indgående kendskab til ikke blot Averröes tænkning, men også den moderne receptionshistorie, der ikke blot fremstilles, men også diskuteres på kvalificeret og selvstændig vis. Forfatterne har endvidere også nogle få men velvalgte kritiske kommentar til den måde, den muslimske filosofihistorie også mere generelt er blevet fremstillet på i oversigtsværker over vestlig filosofihistorie. De kommer i denne sammenhæng i noterne også løbende ind på nogle af de nyere alternative læsninger af den muslimske filosofihistorie hos for eksempel Moḥammad Arkoun og særlig Moḥammad al-Ǧābirī. Forfatterne har også fortaget hensigtsmæssige afgrænsninger af materialet. For eksempel er det af omfangsmæssige grunde et fornuftigt fravalg ikke at gå nærmere ind på Averröes forhold til Avicenna. Der gås heller ikke dybere ind på andre opfattelser af *ḥikma*, visdom, således som denne udfoldes efter Avicenna i den østlige filosofi hos for eksempel Suhrawardi, eller i udviklingen af sufi-tænkningen i Andalusien efter Averröes hos for eksempel den andalusiske tænker ibn al-ʿArabī. Disse ting kunne være interessante at få udfoldet, men vil sprænge rammen for fremstillingen af *Dad*.

Man kan kun anbefale de to forfattere at forsætte dette arbejde med at præsentere centrale muslimske filosofiske tekster på samme høje niveau som denne udgivelse. Og til læseren af denne anmeldelse: hvad enten han eller hun er interesseret i forholdet imellem tro og fornuft i Islams idehistorie, eller mere generelt er filosofisk interesseret i at afdække forholdet imellem religion og filosofi eller simpelt hen i al almindelighed er interesseret i filosofisk refleksion på højt niveau: denne udgivelse er stærkt anbefalelsesværdig!

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