Political Thought in Islam

A Study in Intellectual Boundaries

Nelly Lahoud

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Political Thought in Islam

This book is a study of political thought in Islam from the viewpoint of the history of ideas and the relevance of these ideas to contemporary Arabic political discourse.

The author examines the use of the classical Islamic tradition (*turāth*) and its religious and philosophical components, by the three dominant Arabic political discourses of the Islamists, Apologists and Intellectuals. The book analyses the different assumptions advanced by these discourses and the way they propose to apply or restore the *turāth* in the present. It argues that the authenticity (*aṣāla*) that is claimed by each of these groups is by no means self-defining; if anything, the realities that the *turāth* subsumes are characterised by tensions, ambiguities and change more than is commonly recognised.

Exploring connections between the medieval Islamic tradition and current debates, this book will be essential reading for advanced students and researchers of Islam and political thought.

Nelly Lahoud completed her PhD in 2002 at the Australian National University. In 2003 she was a post-doctoral researcher at St John's College, University of Cambridge, and now teaches political theory at Goucher College, USA. She has been awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship in Islamic Studies at the Library of Congress and is the co-editor of *Islam in World Politics* (RoutledgeCurzon, 2005).

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Preface

The research that led to the writing of this volume began in 1999. It grew out of interest in the Arabic Islamic tradition, its past and its present. But before the work was completed, events on the world stage led many others to take an interest in anything related to Islam. This, in some respects, has had positive consequences for Islamic studies, in that more financial resources have since been invested in the discipline. On the other hand, some of the interest has been generated for the wrong reasons – as if Islam is a cause of a malady and its understanding will help us find a cure. More so than many other topics of investigation, then, Islam has now been reduced to a commodity; or to change the metaphor, it has become an industry. In consequence, anyone undertaking a study of Islam is, directly or indirectly, associated with and perhaps benefiting from this industry. I would like to think that my study is an exception to this tendency, but I am realistic enough to concede that it is not. Ideologies abound and ideas seem to take a backseat. In such an overheated intellectual environment, my ambition is that this book might cause people to *hesitate* before they ascribe to Islam wholesale attributes, be they negative or unfounded politically correct ones.

This book is a study of political thought in Islam from the standpoint of the history of ideas and the relevance of these ideas to contemporary Arabic political discourse. In some respects, this study trespasses on the territories of the religious and the philosophical in the Islamic tradition en route to a critical understanding of it, as it pertains to the political sphere. While drawing on studies in philology, the approach is not driven by source criticism and similar philological considerations. Nevertheless, due attention is given to the contents of the works examined as well as their historical contexts.

It draws mainly on Arabic sources and focuses on writings and thinkers belonging to the Arab world. The Islamic tradition, of course,

extends far beyond the Arab world and finds expression in many languages and cultures other than Arabic. In this respect, this study is limited in its scope. However, it is also true that the influence of Arabic thought extends to the Islamic world in general, and in this sense, many of the ideas and debates that I address in the book have echoes in other parts of the Islamic world.

Essentially, my approach is to examine the use of the religious and philosophical components in the classical Islamic tradition (*turāth*) by three dominant Arabic political discourses, those of the Islamists, the Apologists and the Intellectuals. I analyse the assumptions these discourses advance in relation to their different understandings of the *turāth* and the way each intends to apply or restore it in the present. I then explore related aspects of the *turāth* and consider whether they lend themselves to the views and claims made of them or for them in these discourses. I argue that the authenticity (*aṣāla*) that is claimed by each of these groups is by no means self-defining or self-evident. If anything, the realities that the *turāth* subsumes are characterised more by tensions, ambiguities and dynamics of change than is commonly recognised and appreciated. Ultimately, the claims that are advanced about the *turāth* are less about its substance and more about the political motives and agenda of those who are claiming to defend it.

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In many ways this book was an unwitting collaboration between three great universities and a generous research foundation, each of which provided me with the necessary scholarly, moral and material support. I am grateful for the support I received from the Political Science Program, Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University, where I was a PhD scholar and later a Program Visitor for the first half of 2004. I am also indebted to Trinity College and the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford, for the support I received during my graduate exchange programme in 2000. My profound gratitude also goes to St John's College and the Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, for the support and resources they made available to me during my post-doctoral research there as the Naden Student for Research in Divinity (2002–3). I am further indebted to the Earhart Foundation for providing me with a research grant to assist me in the final phase of writing this book.

I have benefited from the support, advice, suggestions and friendships of many people during the different stages of my research, some of whom also took the time to comment on some of the chapters. In particular, I would like to thank Maroun Aouad, Sean Batt, Sara Binzer

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Parts of Chapter 4 were published as 'Some Aspects of Islamic Allegory', *Colloquy: Test Theory Critique*, issue 5, 2001, and are reproduced here with permission.

Notes on translation and transliteration

In translating Arabic texts, I benefited from the generous suggestions by Anthony H. Johns and Tony Street. When available, I also consulted published translations of some of the Arabic texts referred to in this book. But unless otherwise stated, translations of Arabic and French are my own.

I have omitted the transliteration of modern names, that is, those belonging to the nineteenth century onwards. There is also no transliteration for frequently used terms, such as Muhammad, Qur'an and Hadith (Muḥammad, Qur'ān, Ḥadīth).

A glossary of Arabic terms and their English equivalents is available at the end of the book.

Arabic letters are transliterated as follows:

ء	ʾ	ض	ḍ
ب	b	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ẓ
ث	th	ع	ʿ
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	ḥ	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	h
ش	sh	و	w
ص	ṣ	ى	y

Long vowels are transliterated as follows:

ا & ى	ā
و	ū
ي	ī

Introduction

Forgive, forgive
You must forgive

For if you do not
Empty will your paradise be[1]

Challenging God in this way, which the tribes of Banī Lām in Iraq are reputed to have done, is seldom mentioned as an element in the Islamic tradition (*turāth*). The Islamic tradition is commonly described as being fixed in its intellectual make-up, essentially limited to a corpus consisting of the two foundation texts, the divinely revealed Qur'an, and the utterances and deeds of His Messenger Muhammad contained in the Hadith. Moreover, *islām*, which in Arabic means submission to God, is often applied to the description of the entire Islamic tradition, to suggest that submission is its defining feature. Is the Islamic tradition truly fixed and monolithic in its substance and expressions? Are there no currents within it that vary and add to the complexities of such a monolithic image?

Reductionist interpretations of what the Islamic tradition represents abound. One of the most influential and frequently cited scholars, Samuel Huntington, is unambiguous in his appraisal of Islam: the West has a 'problem', he writes, and it 'is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam'.[2] Huntington's view is not isolated; it is representative of a common discourse among generalist academics and policy-makers in the West. But reductionist interpretations of the Islamic tradition are not limited to the discourses of certain journalists and academics in the West; they are also advanced by some Arab and Muslim thinkers, whose discourses are the focus of this book.

This book explores three contemporary Arabic discourses, those of the Islamists, the Apologists and the Intellectuals, all three competing

to advance their own interpretations of the Islamic tradition. By discourse, I mean a process that deploys ideas to instil certain inclinations in people's minds that would make them favourable to a political objective and dispose them to viewing those ideas as truth. The argument I advance in this study is that these groups' discourses, while driven in the first instance to respond to political circumstances in their societies, are nevertheless generating problems of an intellectual order. By this I am referring to a tendency by these groups to deploy arbitrarily, each in its way, the *turāth* for contemporary political ends and agendas. These three currents are highly public and politicised currents. They do not represent all of the thinkers writing in the Arab world on subjects pertaining to the Islamic tradition. The critique I present in this study is therefore limited to these currents, and it is not to be generalised to the 'Arab mind' – or the 'Muslim mind' for that matter.[3]

The classification of thinkers into discrete and specific categories is inevitably arbitrary to some degree. I am adapting and modifying here the classification and definition used by Ghassan Finianos in his survey of contemporary Arabic intellectual currents, in which he distinguishes between 'Islamists, Apologists, and free thinkers'.[4] Further, in assigning thinkers to one or other of these categories, I recognise that each encompasses individuals who may be in disagreement with one another on certain matters. Islamists, for example, can differ on views[5] and objectives, as well as modes of activism, and so do the Apologists and the Intellectuals. In adopting this classificatory scheme, I am therefore concerned with the central issues that I understand them to have in common.

Islamism is the term currently used to identify a complex of political currents that understand Islam as a political ideology, an Islamist being an adherent of currents. A common characteristic of such; Islamism is a selective and literal approach to the foundation texts, Qur'an and Hadith, that is, selecting Qur'anic verses and Hadith reports without due sensitivity to context or alternative traditional interpretations, but whose literal sense is conducive to their political objectives. Also common among Islamists is the objective to bring about an Islamic state, which has the sharī'a as its constitution.

The Apologists are representative of a current which emphasises that human reasoning is sanctioned in Islam, and that it may be freely applied to the corpus of revelation. They are commonly referred to as Liberal Muslims in European languages, which, to my mind, does not fairly describe these thinkers. I use the term Apologists because I find it more in tune with their intellectual endeavour. For while they

seek to adapt Islam to the challenges of contemporary societies, they are also concerned to frame their discourse through what is essentially an intellectual defence of their religion.

The discourse of both these currents is based on the foundation texts of Islam. Unlike the Islamists, the Apologists do not seek to bring about an Islamic system of governance. Rather, their primary goal is to adapt Islam to modernity, and they seek to influence political trends and developments to facilitate this. With this objective in mind, they approach the foundation texts on the basis of a contextual hermeneutical theory rather than a literal reading of them. Whereas the Islamists generally advocate an exclusivist interpretation of Islam relying on selected Qur'anic verses which they understand in a literal sense, and seek to apply their imperatives accordingly, the Apologists – albeit in an equally selective manner – rely on verses that are inclusive in character, and promote tolerance. A more detailed discussion of the approaches of the Islamists and the Apologists is presented in Chapter 1.

'Intellectuals' form the third current.[6] In a general sense, an intellectual is anyone who engages the intellect in the exercise of understanding the human condition. With such a broad definition, many in the Arab world and beyond qualify as intellectuals, including both Islamists and Apologists. However, I deliberately use the term 'Intellectual' in a restricted sense to refer only to those Arab thinkers: (i) whose exploration of the *turāth* is not exclusively through the lenses of the religious foundation texts; (ii) whose starting point of exploration is conditioned by contemporary concerns; and (iii) who designate themselves as Intellectuals (*muthaqqafūn*) by virtue of their exploration of these concerns. These Intellectuals are often, but not always, academics in university posts, for the most part working in the field of philosophy. The approach of the Intellectuals is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

This definition of Intellectuals needs further qualification. There is another group of Arab academics who are also concerned with the study of the past. They study the past primarily as a field of knowledge through the disciplines of philology, history and philosophy. No doubt they have an influence on contemporary understandings of the *turāth* among the other groups, but because their focus is on the past for its own sake, they are not concerned in seeing their works as having an interventionist role in the shaping of contemporary society. Accordingly, they are less prone than the Intellectuals to regard themselves as competing with the discourses of the Islamists and the Apologists. Therefore, their works are not integral to this

study, but I draw on some of their writings as a means of presenting a critique of the three discourses.

At the heart of the disagreement between the discourses of the Islamists, the Apologists and the Intellectuals are their understandings of what the medieval Arab-Islamic *turāth* stands for; which of its components (religious and philosophical) are to be accorded relevance in contemporary socio-political life and discourse; and how this relevance is to be achieved. All three deploy their interpretations of the *turāth* in a sense that has political ramifications, and in so doing, they represent it in a way suited to their own agendas.

The Islamists advocate compliance with the teachings of the pious predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*). This compliance is meant to be demonstrated through emulating the period during which they believe the Islamic community was fully observant of all that religion prescribed in the spiritual and public spheres and at the same time enjoyed economic, military and political eminence. In support of this, they quote verses from the Qur'an to justify political measures they deem conducive to their programmes. The Apologists, on the other hand, draw on other verses from the Qur'an to argue that their inclusive understanding of Islam is the correct and authentic reading of their religion. The Intellectuals are distinguished from both by their emphasis on the philosophical current in Islam. This they believe to hold the key to the generation of liberalism and democracy in the contemporary Arab-Islamic world.

Between the Islamists and the Apologists, one may observe a battle fought with the religious verses that each current relies on to support its claim for authenticity. As for the Intellectuals, one may observe in their writings, too, a process of selective emphasis on philosophical texts from the classical period of Islamic thought. They draw selectively on these texts to derive conclusions suited to their 'cultural programmes', which, it will be argued, these texts do not justify.

It is not unusual for different and differing currents to arise within a single tradition. It is also common that cultural or religious traditions are largely identified with certain mainstream customs and the dominant personalities within it. This is the case in the development of almost every tradition. It is perhaps unavoidable that conflicting dynamics ensue between the dominant current of a tradition on one hand and the minor ones, holding different or dissenting values and interpretations, on the other. This can also lead to latent or open hostilities between the dominant and minor currents within a tradition, with each current appropriating a distinct sense of righteousness,

and asserting the authenticity of the tradition to the values and interpretations it holds.

Complications arise, however, when such tensions within a society move from a situation of intense debate to a situation of argument by elimination, that is, when conflicts between currents change from being a source of intellectual challenge to one of mutual intolerance, when one current perceives the other as a threat to its distinctive values, and considers its elimination as an intrinsic step towards the realisation of its own values.

Such dynamics characterise contemporary prevalent Arabic discourses on the *turāth*, how it should be understood and the relevance to be accorded to it in the present. The Arabic word *turāth* – for which an approximate English equivalent is 'tradition', which also has the sense of 'heritage', 'legacy' and 'culture' – carries complex ideological connotations. The *turāth* does not only imply the history of a tradition that extends to the present; it also conveys the active sense of seeking to shape a political present by interpreting its identity in terms of a particular image of its past.[7] This latter sense runs through the approaches of the currents I explore. Each current gives authority and a priority of claim (*aḥaqqiyya*) to its stance by basing its identity on those aspects it selects from the *turāth* which are conducive to its programme.

A reflection of these ideological connotations is that the *turāth* is often spoken of in intellectual Arabic parlance not as a study (*baḥth*) but as a problématique (*ishkāliyya*). In other words, it is an issue that is intrinsically problem-generating, as opposed to problem-solving. And these problems are not limited to theoretical debates. Their manifestations are disturbing: there is a long list of Arab thinkers assassinated, imprisoned or forced into exile because they were deemed to be advancing non-conformist interpretations of the *turāth*.[8] Disturbing manifestations of this kind are not limited to the fate of thinkers. Many Muslims (and non-Muslims) are now hostages to the radical Islamists' interpretation of the Islamic *turāth* and attempts to impose it on them. Being authentically Islamic and faithful to the *turāth* so that its glories can be achieved again in the present is what sits at the centre of the political rhetoric and activism of radical Islamists.

In his seminal three-volume study, *al-Thābit wa al-Mutaḥawwil* (The Constant and the Changing), the scholar and poet Adonis (*nom de plume* of ʿAli Ahmad Saʿid) concludes that:

> Culture (*thaqāfa*) is not [a process of] recovering [from the past], but [a process of] producing [something new]. When we read or

> write, we must be fully conscious that far from being static and established, culture is something dynamic and productive. It is not to be reduced to a collection of remnants from the past, of values, standards and accomplished achievements. Rather, it is a movement that is [always] on its way to producing something new, unique in its progress in the direction of the future . . . Culture is not that which we have produced, but that which we are producing.[9]

This is indeed an eloquent summation of what Adonis considers to be the dynamics of change in the development of cultures and traditions. However, his view that cultural change always follows a forward motion is somewhat poetic. The direction of the movement of cultures and traditions, Islamic or otherwise, and whether they are imagined, constructed or real is not always as future-driven as Adonis suggests.[10] From a historical perspective, tradition moves by a process of inhaling and exhaling the past. At times, it is a process that acts as a constructive tool and as a source of innovation. At other times, it is a process that can withhold the present and the future as hostages of emulation of the past.

The relevance of the *turāth* in contemporary Islamic political thought is so acute that it is only a critical exploration of it that can provide a key to a clearer view of the forces at work in the present, and perhaps to be continued in the future as it unfolds. But should the exploration of the *turāth* always seek – as most contemporary Arabic intellectual currents do – to find answers in the past to contemporary socio-political problems? Is it possible that this exploration assesses, appraises and interrogates the past in so far as this is possible, but in such a way that the *turāth* remains in the past, so that it is remembered, not called back to life, acknowledged, not sanctified, inherited but not commanded to serve the present?

The problem is not the past *per se*, but that the dominant perception of that past in the present is marred by an obfuscation to do with the understanding of what it stands for. It is as Daryush Shayegan puts it, as if a 'cultural schizophrenia' has occurred. Muhammad Benis writes that, unlike many other cultures, Arab culture (*al-thaqāfa al-ʿarabiyya*) is hedged about by silence. He observes that:

> the world has come to know us only through our recent/modern civilisation, and this is something that in the Arab world we hardly acknowledge, and most often we ignore . . . For this reason, the

> *other* knows *us* more than we know ourselves [emphasis added], or perhaps more than we are prepared to know ourselves.[11]

Benis is here touching on a key aspect in the dominant Arabic political discourses on the *turāth*. It is the extent to which the Islamists, Apologists and Intellectuals are prepared not only to be enchanted but also disappointed as a result of getting to know the past. Such a movement then should not be concerned to entangle further the present with the past, but rather to disentangle the present from some of the apparent or real yokes of the past in so far as it is possible and desirable. It should be a movement that seeks to come to terms with not just the triumphs and civilising contributions of the *turāth*, but also one that has a spirit of humility ready to recognise and confront the failures and even some of the destructive elements of that *turāth*.

There is little doubt that the emphasis on *turāth* that is currently impeding constructive and inclusive political discourses is the result of an amalgam of causes other than shortcomings in intellectual approaches. Over the past three centuries, the Arab world has undergone complex political transformations. These include a process (during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) that saw it change from being an imperial and a colonising entity to becoming colonised entities. During this period, it experienced a contracted renaissance (*nahḍa*); this was exacerbated by the rise of Arab nationalism, which neither fulfilled its dream of pan-Arabism nor led to the success of the diverse nationalist movements that sprang up under its umbrella. This was accompanied by the development of authoritarian institutions of government, often aided by outside powers, e.g. the US, Britain, France, the former Soviet Union, etc., each with its own agenda and a varying degree of impact. These diverse political factors have made it convenient for political actors to deploy rhetoric about the *turāth* as a tool for various purposes, whether for the promotion of modernisation, Westernisation, Arabisation or, more recently, Islamisation.

Political considerations aside, the *turāth* is increasingly losing its normative and intellectual substance. Instead, for the Islamists, Apologists and Intellectuals, it is conceived of as a tangible, knowable and unambiguous reservoir of data, from which one can pick and choose aspects relevant to contemporary concerns. In short, it is not only that the present seems stuck in the past and is thus losing its contemporaneity; it is also that the past is losing its historical substance by being 'forcefully' imported to a present that is largely alien to its normative context.

In this study, my general approach is to question the central assumptions which Islamists, Apologists and Intellectuals make about the Islamic tradition. My approach in part draws on some aspects of Adonis's study of the Islamic tradition in which he identifies two currents: the Constant (*al-thābit*) and the Changing (*al-mutaḥawwil*), hence the title of his study *al-Thābit wa al-Mutaḥawwil*. The Constant, according to Adonis, is a current based on revelation, i.e. the religion of Islam, and provides the foundation of Arabic civilisation/culture (*thaqāfa*). It also ascribes to itself a priority of claim (*aḥaqqiyya*) to authority based on its own interpretation of the past, and rejects every other reading that does not conform to it. The Changing, on the other hand, is a current that refuses to accept the *aḥaqqiyya* of the Constant, and relies on its own differing interpretation of that same past. In this, the processes that characterise the Changing are those particular to a current that operates outside the 'Islamic' establishment.[12]

Adonis believes that this dynamic has been at work throughout Islamic history. However, a combination of factors, including the political theology, tribal affiliations and political circumstances in which the Constant has been enmeshed, have resulted in it having a position of dominance. One of the characteristics of the Constant is a theology that plays on the ontological status of revelation. He explains this status as one that transcends time and the categories within which time is subsumed, i.e. past, present and future. Revelation is simultaneously the past in so far as it sees itself as the beginning, the present in so far as it is a continuum and the future in so far as it is the eschatological endpoint.[13] Time, then, is subservient to revelation. Accordingly, what pertains to religion comes to be above time and consequently above history:[14]

> Time, here then, is prophetic time. And in prophetic time, the future is transformed into the past, for the prophet does not proceed towards the future, he remembers the future. . . . Prophetic time takes the individual back to the past, by placing the past in the future. As such, the future becomes one of the forms of the past.[15]

A society that finds its basis and ultimate justification in revelation, Adonis argues, develops a bond with what it regards as the 'Constant', and that in religious terms is 'the face of God'. Anything other than this is imperfect. It is from this perspective that the concept of the 'Changing' has a negative connotation, for this would be a deviation from the 'Constant', i.e. the perfect.[16]

Because it is founded on revelation, Adonis contends, Arabic civilisation is disposed towards conformity (*ittibāʿiyya*); accordingly, it is inclined to reject and even condemn originality (*ibdāʿ*) and intellectual progress (*taqaddum*).[17] Adonis is arguing here that a constructive intellectual approach is one that goes outside the dominant current of the *turāth*. In other words, it is Change, not Constancy that should characterise both the way in which the *turāth* is understood and appreciated, and the way in which new and modern challenges are faced. This should be so even if the changes that result are not consistent with the precedents established in the *turāth*.

There is much that is convincing and suggestive in Adonis's study of the *turāth* and of his analysis of revelation as the dominant current in the Islamic tradition. Yet, there is room for further nuances in his analysis. My preference is not to speak of the Constant and the Changing in the Islamic tradition as two fixed elements. Rather, I wish to highlight the processes of Change within the Constant, and the processes of the Constant within what is considered as Change. For if it so wishes, the Constant is capable of appropriating to its sphere the Changing by devoting adequate 'exegetical' energy. Similarly, the Changing is capable of presenting itself as a Constant, and of developing dynamics that are of the Constant variety. To put my approach in Adonisian parlance, it is to speak of *al-mutaḥawwil fī al-thābit* and *al-thābit fī al-mutaḥawwil*.

At a very basic and central level, the Islamic tradition is marked by Changing characteristics. Students of Islam struggle through the many intricacies that they must acquaint themselves with in order to get even a minimum understanding of Islam. Even among the matters that are universally accepted by observing Muslims, there exist varieties of points of views. Take for example the complexities associated with the main sources of authority in the Islamic tradition, Qur'an and Hadith.

The Qur'an for Muslims is the words of God revealed to Muhammad by the Angel Gabriel. It is the very basis of the Islamic religion and its most authoritative source. Its chapters (*Sūra*), 114 in total, are divided into Makkan and Madinan, the former referring to those revelations that Muhammad received before his emigration (*hijra*) in CE 622, the latter referring to the ones received after the *hijra*. Despite them all being the words of God, some Muslim commentators give precedence to the Madinan ones, especially as a guide to administering communal affairs.

Further, one is faced with the task of understanding the content of the Qur'an, which, without adequate training in Arabic and exegesis,

is not always self-explanatory or accessible.[18] Some verses do not make obvious sense, if read outside their specific historical contexts. Early Muslim scholars addressed this by pointing to the importance of *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelations), that is, the existential circumstances around which certain verses were revealed. These verses and the existential circumstances surrounding their revelations were identified based on reports by the companions of the Prophet designed to that effect, which have come to be a branch of learning in Qurʾanic studies in their own right. Moreover, trained scholars are not always in full agreement about the meanings of Qurʾanic verses. The tradition of Qurʾan commentaries known as *tafsīr* dates back to the early period of Islam, and not only do some commentators differ on interpretations, some of them advance multiple interpretations for a single verse. The Qurʾanic commentary *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (The Great Commentary) by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī is typical of that genre.

The corpus of Hadith is not unequivocal. It comprises what are believed to be the sayings and deeds of Muhammad and what it is considered he approved of, even implicitly. It thus serves as the second most authoritative source in Islam. But not all Hadith reports are considered authoritative or *ṣaḥīḥ*, 'sound'. In order to be so, a report must have its authenticity validated by an *isnād*, a chain of transmission that links it directly to Muhammad. The collections having special authority and considered to be *ṣaḥīḥ* are those based on the collections of *Ṣaḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī and that of Muslim, referred to in the dual as *al-ṣaḥīḥān*. In addition to these two, four other authoritative Hadith follow, the *Sunan* of al-Nasāʾī, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Māja. These six are referred to as the Six Collections, but there are other collections also considered to be reliable, particularly Ibn Mālik's *Muwaṭṭa* and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*. Other Hadith outside these collections are generally considered *ḍaʿīf*, 'weak', and are thus less authoritative.

Despite being considered a defined corpus, the Qurʾan and Hadith therefore encompass many heterogeneous elements, and cannot simply be considered as a fixed corpus. Moreover, early Muslim scholars discerned that these two sources are not sufficient in themselves to address the challenges facing the Islamic community, and so they devised other tools that would allow them to cater for newly emerging issues. Thus some resorted to *qiyās*, analogy or deductive reasoning based on the Qurʾan and Hadith; when *qiyās* proved insufficient, they resorted to *ijmāʿ*, consensus of the community led by learned scholars, and some resorted to *ijtihād*, individual reasoning by learned scholars.

But differences of views were still not all accommodated, and alongside the above developments, different *madhāhib* (s.: *madhhab*) or schools of law emerged.[19] Though using the Hadith as a basis for enacting laws, each took on its own distinct characteristics with different principles of procedures. The four main Sunni schools are those named after their founders, the Ḥanafī *madhhab* named after Abū Ḥanīfa (CE 698–767), the Mālikī *madhhab* named after Mālik Ibn Anas (CE 718–95), the Shāfi'ī *madhhab* named after al-Shāfiʿī (CE 767–820) and the Ḥanbalī *madhhab* named after Ibn Ḥanbal (CE 780–855). These were all complex developments in the early centuries of Islam. To use Fazlur Rahaman's words, they were organic in that they developed and changed, but they were also 'elusive'.[20] In other words the development of the Islamic tradition was far from being static.

This heterogeneous description applies mainly to the Sunni wing in Islam. Other sects exist in Islam: one of the more prominent ones is Shīʿism,[21] whose development goes back to the early period of Islam. Its adherents were the followers of ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib (*shīʿat ʿAlī*), cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad and who, they believed, because of his kinship to Muhammad, should have been the first Caliph to assume the leadership of the Muslim community. The political theology of the Shīʿa thus followed a different direction from that of the Sunni. As opposed to the Sunni emphasis on consensus, the Shīʿa believed that the leader of the Muslim community should be decided by God, and this they believed to be vested in the figure of the Imam ʿAlī until his occultation, then in his descendants. They continued to allow a special status for the Prophet as the recipient of revelation, so the Imam does not have a claim to receive revelation, but is endowed with *luṭf*, 'illumination', that gives him a unique capacity to interpret the revelation to the Prophet. There are numerous branches of Shīʿism emphasising in varying degrees divine rights and messianic traits. The Twelver Shīʿa (*ithnā ʿashariyya*), for example, believe that the twelfth Imam, a direct descendant from Muhammad and ʿAlī and who died in the ninth century is still alive and will reappear on Judgement Day.

Even the generally accepted sources of authority and divisions in the Islamic tradition, then, are characterised by Change. The philosophical corpus is equally heterogeneous and dynamic in its influences and development. It is, then, within the flux of the Changing and the Constant that I intend to explore the assumptions upon which the discourses of the Islamists, Apologists and Intellectuals rest.

In this book, I investigate a number of aspects of the *turāth* to assess whether any of these supports the claims based on it. This is not to suggest that it is possible to identify in a positive or apodeictic way the core of the *turāth*, against which to judge the various interpretations of it as right or wrong. Rather, my goal is to identify and explore the heterogeneous elements and currents within the *turāth*. In turn, I shall consider whether any of them lends itself to support a particular view or position in these discourses; and whether others either reveal fresh emphases or even fly in the face of positions that are taken for granted by one or other of these discourses.

1 The Islamists and the Apologists

> An idea isn't responsible for the people who believe in it
>
> Don Marquis

Of the several currents of thought in contemporary Islam, the Islamist current undoubtedly enjoys greater 'authenticity' among the general public. It is essentially a political current that uses its particular interpretation of the Islamic tradition as its ideological platform. Islamists emphasise their faithful adherence to the Islamic foundation texts, Qur'an and Hadith, which they, in turn, use selectively as a tool to justify their political programmes. The radical among them draw on these texts even to legitimate their call to violence. This current has assumed the right to adjudicate what is authentic, ethical and moral in the spheres of politics and social behaviour in the Islamic community. This seemingly faithful adherence to the teachings of the foundation texts has enabled it virtually to monopolise Islamic 'authenticity' in the minds of many Muslims and non-Muslims. As a consequence, there exists now a broad perception of Islam that identifies it with Islamism. This perception is not false in so far as Islamism represents an intellectually active political stream of Islam. But it is incomplete in so far as Islamism does not represent all of the intellectual currents within Islam.

The Apologist current advances an alternative interpretation of Islam. It is made up of Muslim thinkers, often academics, who, conscious of Islam being a powerful political tool in the hands of Islamists, are seeking to deploy Islam for different purposes. Essentially, they are using Islam as a tool to promote political trends that can be adapted to the now globally dominant political values in the West such as democracy and liberalism. They represent a current that is on the rise in popularity among academics and policy-makers in the Western world.[1] It is commonly referred to as 'Liberal

Islam', and the thinkers whose views form this current are referred to as 'Liberal Muslims'.

This neologism is recent or has at least become increasingly used over the past decade.[2] It is, however, a category that does not adequately describe these individuals. To my knowledge, they do not use the Arabic equivalent of liberals, *aḥrār*, to describe themselves. Moreover, the political circumstances of the Arab-Islamic world are so dire as far as good governance, human rights, democracy and so on are concerned that the very notion of 'liberal' in a transparent sense of the term requires an exercise of the imagination. One can certainly speak of liberal-minded Muslims or of liberal traits in the Islamic tradition, but it would be misleading to speak of contemporary 'liberal Islam' in the absence of the foundation of a minimum political theory of liberty (outside the patriotic poetry and songs) that is also translated into liberal institutions and political practices.

In this study, I use the term Apologists not without unease, for I recognise the problems with typologies as well as the fact that Apologist is a term that is loaded in meanings. As I note in the Introduction, I use this term because I consider these thinkers to have an agenda, which is to adapt Islam to what they deem as necessary modern challenges and, further, because they frame their interpretations through what is essentially a defence of their religion.

The Islamist approach and its intellectual roots

Writing in his *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'an* (In the Shadows of the Qur'an), Sayyid Qutb, still the most influential Islamist ideologue, expresses an approach to the Islamic tradition that is common among Islamists. It takes the form of a reification of Islam, and promotes this reification as an exact emulation of the teachings and practices of the early Muslim community, as if it is a 'return' to an idealised past:

> And we are taken in at times by deceptive appearances pertaining to the division of cosmic norms (*sunan kawniyya*). When we observe [for example] that [it is accepted that] the adherence to the laws of nature would lead to success, even if the religious values were contravened. The results of this division are not immediately apparent, but they will certainly be evident in the end. . . . and that is what has befallen the Muslim community itself. The line of its ascent began in a period during which the laws of nature coincided with the religious values. The line of its descent began when the two came to be [perceived as] separate. It continued to decline gradually as the separation between the

> two grew wider until it reached its nadir when the Muslim community completely disregarded the natural norms and the religious values altogether.[3]

Here, Qutb is alluding to the periods during which he believes true Islam was fully realised. By far the truest Islam for Qutb was that experienced during the rule of Muhammad at Madīna in CE 622–32.[4] This was a foundational period that saw a virtually miraculous development of the Muslim community; it represents a fusion between the religious and the political spheres, which coincided with power and prosperity. Qutb laments that '"the existence" of the Islamic community (*umma*) is considered to have been interrupted for many centuries'.[5]

Qutb's views are symptomatic of the Islamists' discourse in general. It takes the form of a search for a cure for the ailment of political instability and perceived moral decadence. It sees the cause of this ailment as a divergence between the observance of Islam and the conduct of social and political affairs. The main thrust of this discourse is that the apogee of humanity in its ethical, political and social spheres was reached during the time of the founder of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad. The ideal, then, has already been reached beyond which no further progress is possible. Given that the death of the Prophet was followed by a sharp decline in human ideals, so runs the argument, moral and political progress may be achieved only through emulating a past when the Muslim community is believed to have scrupulously observed the teachings of the Qur'an.

The twentieth century saw a rapid rise of groups of Muslims who use Islam as an ideological weapon for their political ends. This is the current commonly referred to in scholarly and media writings as Islamism and its proponents are designated as 'Islamists', not Muslims, in order to stress that they are attributing an ideological dimension to Islam.[6] In Western languages one also finds related terms, such as 'post-Islamism', 'fundamentalism', 'neo-fundamentalism', the French language adding 'intégrisme' to the list.[7] In Arabic, one finds in the relevant literature other descriptions to this current, such as 'political Islam' (*al-islām al-siyāsī*), 'Islamic expansion' (*al-madd al-islāmī*) or, as the Islamists themselves describe it, the 'Islamic awakening' (*al-ṣaḥwa al-islāmiyya*).

There are many Islamist groups, but as might be expected the use of scriptural language is a common characteristic of their rhetoric. For example, they all use scriptural references as an immutable source of authority in the social, ethical and political spheres. While they do

not always share the same strategies and goals, they nevertheless resort to the same sources of authority and deploy similar terms of references.[8] For example, they highlight the central role that Islam occupies in their political activities, stressing that they are not simply Islamic political parties engaged in politics but they are political parties founded on Islam as an ideological platform.[9] Further, they seem to agree upon three main precepts: *māḍawiyya* (a return to the Islamic principles of the past), *shumūliyya* (a comprehensive application of Islam in all spheres of life) and *al-daʿwa al-niḍāliyya* (a call for struggle to bring about the Islamisation of the state and society).[10]

From the perspective of the late twentieth and beginning of twenty-first centuries, the intellectual roots and developments of Islamism can be traced back, in part, to earlier thinkers and movements, in particular to the *salafiyya* movement. It is a movement that emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and whose leading figures advocated a return to the teachings of the pious forefathers (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* – hence the name *salafiyya*).[11] Of the many meanings of *salaf* that the Arabic lexicon *Lisān al-ʿArab* lists, the most fitting is 'we have made them the predecessors so that others are guided by them'. It is an ambiguous term, one that can be deployed rhetorically to imply positive connotations without necessarily giving a precise meaning. Other definitions of *salaf* exist which seem to suggest that the *salaf* are pious Sunni predecessors, excluding those revered by the Shīʿites, like ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib.[12] The general meaning of *salaf* though is the one most emphasised.

The context in which the *salafiyya* emerged was related in part to the political conditions of the Ottoman Empire. Its decline, eventual fall and the subsequent colonisation by Western powers of territories previously parts of a strong Islamic conglomerate led to a new intellectual movement in the Arab world. It was characterised by a renewal (*tajdīd*) of Islam, as a response to the emerging socio-political and technological changes. This *tajdīd* served as an intellectual platform for the *salafiyya*, and it developed primarily under the influence, in chronological order, of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897), Muhammad ʿAbduh (d. 1905) and Rashid Rida (d. 1935).

This line of the *salafiyya* emerged in the late nineteenth century, and its members advocated reform (*iṣlāḥ*) from within the tradition of Islam.[13] Their aim was to adapt Islam to modernity and, through it, to thwart the influence of the West, which was rapidly impinging on the Muslim world.[14] They based their call for *iṣlāḥ* in Scripture, citing, for example, the many verses in the Qurʾan that praise those who practise *iṣlāḥ*,[15] and a hadith in which Muhammad had said that

a reformer (*mujaddid*) would appear at the beginning of every century.[16] Their reforms called for the modernisation but not secularisation of the Islamic world. Rashid Rida, for instance, advocated the modernisation of sharīʿa in such a way that separation of religion, state and civil society could be achieved.[17]

The *salafiyya* generated various responses in the Arab world and beyond. Werner Ende notes that the emergence in the years 1927–8 of the Muslim Brotherhood (*Al-Ikhwān Al-Muslimūn*), the movement that continues to form the ideological basis of most Islamist movements in the Islamic world today, marked a change in the development of the *salafiyya*. The founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hasan al-Banna, was inspired by the writings of Rashid Rida, Banna developing the intellectual stimulus that started with the *salafiyya* towards religious conservatism. He also sought to spread religious teachings widely, and thus focused on education for the masses.[18] In this sense, therefore, the *salafiyya* movement is considered by some as the precursor of Islamism. The emergence of an outwardly secular Arab nationalism, and the banning of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1954, saw a decline of the *salafiyya* as a reform movement, but its ideas and ideals were to re-surface in Islamist, Apologist and other forms.

While the influence of the *salafiyya* may be identified in the programmes of some Islamists, it is also the case that many of the proposals made by the early reformists have been criticised and dismissed by influential Islamists as the movement took shape. For instance, the Moroccan Islamist ideologue, Abd Assalam Yassin, does not believe that Islam stands in any need of modernisation. Quite the contrary, he believes the goal should be 'to islamicize modernity not to modernize Islam'.[19]

Some scholars have also made some links between the Wahhābī movement and Islamism, the former being a puritanical movement that arose in central Arabia in the eighteenth century.[20] The Wahhābī link is a complex one. The thinkers of the *salafiyya* movement made little impact in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, as far as the intellectual development of Islamism, Egypt stands as the intellectual heartland of the current, producing Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood and Sayyid Qutb.[21] It is only since the late 1970s, and particularly since the success of the Iranian revolution, that Wahhabist teachings began to spread in an intensive way, perhaps even in a calculated way, as Michel Feher suggests. This has been mainly through the funding of religious schools (*madrasa*) beyond the borders of Saudi Arabia and of the Arab world.[22]

It is increasingly difficult to pinpoint with confidence the intellectual parameters of different Islamist groups or individuals. It is no doubt convenient for observers to work with taxonomies and thus use labels and categories, but this does not necessarily reflect the intellectual character of Islamists. One needs only to refer to the many websites that cater for Islamist teachings to find the extent to which there is a 'mix and match' in Islamist textbooks, combining at times sufi, salafi, Wahhabi and Qutbian texts. Among the reasons for this sort of laissez-faire cafeteria style is, as Michael Cook observes about modern Islamic developments in general, the fact that sects and schools no longer define the divisions in Islamic thought as they used to. Except for the Shīʿites and the rest of the Muslims, there is little that remains by way of intellectual superstructure of what once divided, for instance, the Ḥanafis from the Shafiʿites or traditionalists and Ashʿarites.[23]

Notwithstanding the various sources from which Islamists may have drawn their inspiration, a broad bifurcation may be identified as part of the evolution of their discourse. Muhammad Jamal Barut and Ibrahim Aʿrab have identified two different tendencies, a 'moderate' (*muʿtadil*), one associated with a brotherhood discourse (*al-khiṭāb al-ikhwānī*), and an 'extremist' (*mutaṭarrif*), associated with a struggle discourse (*al-khiṭāb al-jihādī*), as they label them.[24]

The 'moderate' tendency is most apparent, for example, in the writings of Banna, who stressed that religious teaching and education (*tarbiya*) should serve as the pillar of a true renaissance (*nahḍa*).[25] Banna, for example, drew on and revived the notion of *daʿwa* ('call' or 'summons'), which in some Qurʾanic verses carries the meaning of an 'invitation' to follow Muhammad in his righteous path.[26] Traditionally, the role of *daʿwa* has implied an active promotion of the virtues of Islamic piety and practices. Banna thus encouraged members of the Muslim Brotherhood to engage in public discussion in mosques and schools as well as in print media about the wider role of Islam in social and political life, as a way of countering the increasing secular discourse that was emerging in Egypt.[27] The 'extremist' jihadist tendency, on the other hand, is discerned in the writings of Sayyid Qutb.[28] He was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood and a strong supporter of Banna's teachings. Qutb, however, took the Islamist discourse to a higher level of ideological activism, stressing the importance of, and calling for, *jihād* and *kifāḥ* (active struggle) in the pursuit of social justice.[29]

Islam, Qutb argues, 'is a whole (*kull*) that cannot be divided, it is either to be taken in its totality (*jumlatan*) or to be abandoned in its

totality'.[30] Islam is to be adopted as an all encompassing creed, such that one cannot lightly and selectively apply it, e.g., as an occasional Islamic legal opinion (*istiftā'*) to solve particular problems, when Islam is not applied in its totality.[31] Qutb went further: he mounted an attack on all of the Islamic states of his day, accusing them of being in a state of *jāhiliyya*. He stated this explicitly in his *Maʿālim fī al-Ṭarīq* (Signposts) where he enumerated those societies which in his view were to be considered as a *jāhilī* society (*al-mujtamaʿ al-jāhilī*). A *jāhilī* society is every society other than the Islamic society, it is a society which is not wholly dedicated to the worship of God alone.[32] Under this category, he identifies those he describes as Marxist societies, pagan/idol worshipping societies (e.g. India, Japan, The Philippines and Africa), Christian and Jewish societies, and 'those societies that claim to be "Islamic" '.[33] Quoting the Qur'an, he adds 'God said of the rulers: "whoso judge not according to what God hath revealed, they are transgressors" (Q. 5: 44)'.[34] The Egyptian authorities feared the popularity of Qutb's writings, and he was hanged in 1966 by Nasser's regime, allegedly for inciting the latter's overthrow.[35] Qutb's role and ideas of what an Islamic state stands for are discussed further in Chapter 3.

Applying the *muʿtadil* and *jihādī* categories of Barut and Aʿrab to post-Qutb ideologues, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi would be representative of the moderate current while Usama bin Laden and his al-Qāʿida movement would fall under the *jihādī* current. Qaradawi was born in Egypt, studied at al-Azhar University, and brings 'techno-Islam' to Islamism. In addition to writing prolifically, he has his own show on al-Jazira television network based in Qatar and broadcast all over the world (through free to air or paid TV), and he has his own website. He is able, therefore, to extend his influence to a large international audience. In his book, *al-Islām wa al-ʿAlmāniyya Wajhan li-Wajh* (Islam and Secularism Face to Face), he defends the Islamist current against the criticisms of secularist thinkers:

> The [Islamist] awakening (*al-ṣaḥwa*) is the only logical and natural development in our Arab-Islamic region. It is the only pure current that is expressive of the conscious of the *umma*, its identity, hopes and ambitions; that is capable of surviving, withstanding and triumphing in the face of challenges because it represents the truth . . .[36]

Some of his writings echo those of Qutb, though without the jihadist element. In the book where he outlines his vision for an Islamic state,

Malāmiḥ al-Mujtamaᶜ al-Muslim alladhī Nanshuduhu (The Outlines of the Islamic Society to Which We Aspire), the sharīᶜa features as the core constitution of the state. Anything short of its application in its entirety, as set out by Qurʾanic and Hadith teachings, would be un-Islamic.[37] Also like Qutb, he emphasises the historical role of Islam and its teleological future: 'We, the Muslims in general, and the Arabs in particular, must respond to God's command . . . and unite.' Secularism is not the answer. 'Muslims must live and die by the Islamic creed.'[38] Unlike Qutb, he is at pains to emphasise the intrinsic tolerance of Islam, writing extensively on the rights of non-Muslims in an Islamic state.[39] Instead of emphasising activism as a means of achieving the Islamic state, Qaradawi chooses to stress Islamic education and adapting Islamic teachings through *ijtihād* to modern challenges.

As for the *jihādī* current, Qutb's writings continue to serve as the basic textbooks of this current. After Qutb, however, the *jihādī* current has been lacking in intellectual substance, even though the political reach of the jihadist al-Qāᶜida has expanded. The al-Qāᶜida movement, led by Usama bin Laden, has been very shallow at the level of political theory. There is not a body of writings that outlines the ideological commitment it is meant to represent. The writings of the Palestinian born Abd Allah al-ᶜAzzam, the supposed ideologue of al-Qāᶜida, are best described as lacking in substance, coherence and even a spiritual dimension. His book, *Joining the Caravan*, is dull. It consists of disconnected thoughts focused on enjoining *jihād*. In it, he relies on sayings by traditional Muslim scholars on *jihād*, also drawing on writings by Qutb, but without attempting to give *jihād* a coherent political or spiritual objective. In short, if the al-Qāᶜida movement sees itself as an independent current, it has not yet provided itself with an intellectual basis that would qualify it as an intellectual current.[40]

By contrast, there is an internal coherence to the discourse of the older generation of Islamists like Banna and Qutb. Despite its rigid formulation, in a paradoxical way, it allows for an open-ended and flexible discourse. At a basic and central level, it is a discourse that supplies divine solutions for worldly problems. Ahmad Shboul notes that for many the Islamist discourse 'does not seem to need any new interpretations. Nor does it appear to require precision or logical clarity, since it is enveloped in oratory, evocation and scriptural references that could mean different things in different contexts.'[41]

What the Islamists' rhetoric is offering, then, goes beyond a practical programme as a solution for the problems of society as they perceive them. Before it is put to practice, their proposed solution

has to undergo an internal historical metamorphosis, in the form of emulating a period of religious observance in the distant past, such that if the divine solutions attempted do not bring a solution, the Islamist rhetoric is capable of resorting to blame, to any extent, the way in which the divine instructions have been applied in this world. This effectively imposes an intellectual stalemate on anything outside it. Put differently, the clearly defined goal to which the Islamists aspire is conditioned by the process of their internal reasoning. This provides them with an 'Islamic' project of an open-ended discourse that can only be deployed to interact with and respond to their own set of claims and instructions, given that the latter are based on nothing less than a divinely ordained programme. It is not that there is a lack of sophistication in the Islamist discourse; rather, it is that the more it develops in intellectual sophistication, the narrower its scope for openness to anything outside it becomes.

The Islamists' discourse, then, is comprehensive in its ambition and is often found persuasive and appealing in its articulations. The authenticity it claims for itself, however, is based on a reified understanding of Islam that omits important aspects of Islamic terms and ways of reasoning. In other words, it is not willing to admit the heterogeneous and legitimate non-conformist elements that have their place in it. Even with the Qur'an and Hadith to which the Islamists claim to adhere, 'these two do not exhaust the nuances, subtleties and varieties of the religion as it was lived and realized even during the time of the prophet'.[42]

Moreover the Islamist discourse fails to admit and accept the inherent ambiguity of Scripture, an ambiguity that, in Islamist parlance, should itself qualify as 'Islamic'. The Qur'an itself describes its message as containing esoteric (*bāṭin*) meanings in addition to its exoteric (*ẓāhir*) message. It indicates explicitly that it contains 'verses [the meaning of which is] clearly established (*muḥkamāt*), they are the mother of the Book. There are other verses that are ambiguous/problematic (*mutashābihāt*)'.[43] This distinction made in the Qur'an itself establishes the legitimacy of disagreement (*ikhtilāf*) with regard to the interpretations of Scripture and hence to the development of various schools of thought within Islam.

In this sense, the Islamic space that Islamists aspire to occupy lacks theological harmony, the characteristics of which are well embedded in the exegetic tradition. As Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd observes, the Qur'an, for the Islamists, assumes the role of an 'object' and the ideology assumes the role of a 'subject'. In other words, they encode their ideology in the language of Scripture, and as such the ideology

assumes the role of religion itself.[44] This is not to suggest that the current is likely to be a short-lived episode in the history of Islam. As James Piscatori notes, it is very possible that 'the very ambiguity of Islamist thought . . . allows space for the flexible development of talismanic ideas such as the "Islamic state"', and accordingly 'Islamism is capable of adaptation and growth'.[45]

The Apologists

The most significant understanding of Islam competing with that of the Islamists and gaining momentum is that of the Apologists. They emphasise in their discourse that independent reasoning is a source of knowledge sanctioned by Islam. Wael Hallaq refers to the proponents of this current as 'liberals', given their flexible stance vis-à-vis Scripture.[46] In his *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*, Charles Kurzman traces the roots of this current to the eighteenth century, specifically to the revivalist movement that was begun in India by Shah Wali-Allah (1703–62) and was taken up by other Muslim thinkers in various regions of the Islamic world.[47] Kurzman's book is a collection of essays by those whom he considers to be Liberal Muslims. These essays highlight the Islamic roots of issues that are considered to be part of Western political values, such as democracy, rights of women and non-Muslims. Kurzman is keen to stress that:

> [the] similarity of liberal Islam and Western liberalism does not imply that liberal Muslims are stale and reassuring imitators of Western philosophy. Many of their writings are firmly rooted in Qur'anic exegesis, in the lives of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslims, and in traditional Islamic forms of debate.[48]

As noted earlier, the terms 'liberals' and 'Liberal Islam' are European expressions, part of a web of semantics often used by policy-makers and scholars (Muslims and non-Muslims) writing in the Western world.[49] These thinkers describe themselves and their works in different terms. Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, for instance, considers himself as a scholar and his work to be in line with 'scientific explanations of the religious texts' (*al-tafsīr al-ʿilmī li al-nuṣūṣ al-dīniyya*).[50] Similarly, Muhammad Shahrour speaks of his work as a 'contemporary reading' (*qirāʾa muʿāṣira*) of religious texts.[51]

As Kurzman notes, the discourse of these thinkers is generally based on traditional Islamic sources, and in this sense, these sources form the apparent intellectual roots of the Apologist current. One can also say

that, as was the case with the Islamists, the *salafiyya* movement has in some respects influenced the Apologists, given the emphasis on reform the thinkers of the *salafiyya* advocated. But what clearly gives the intellectual edge of the Apologists is their response to the attempted appropriation of Islamic authenticity by the Islamists, whom they perceive to be dangerously dogmatic. Their perception is not entirely unjustified, for many thinkers in the Arab-Islamic world, including the Apologists, have suffered, simply because their intellectual views were not pleasing to the Islamists. Among many, the novelist Nawal al-Saʿdawi was imprisoned in Egypt because her writings addressed issues pertaining to individual freedom and feminism. In her own words: 'I have committed every crime. . . . I have written stories, novels and poems. I have published scientific and literary studies, and essays that call for freedom. And I have philosophical leanings.'[52]

In 2001, a court case was brought against her by an Islamist lawyer seeking to divorce her from her husband because she expressed views that were deemed un-Islamic. She was considered a threat to public morality and thus it was unlawful for her to be married to a Muslim.

In many respects, then, the Apologist current is conditioned by the Islamist current and is in essence a reaction to it. There is even a kind of symmetry between the discourse of the Islamists and that of the Apologists, in that the former tends to exacerbate the response of the latter. This is manifest in the Apologists' religious terminology that is essentially intended to take away Islam from the hands of the Islamists and also win confidence and trust for their own discourse. Unlike the Islamists, they do not seek to bring about an Islamic political system; however they do seek to change the direction of Islamic politics, with their primary goal being to adapt Islam to modernity. In doing so, no less than the Islamists they take Scripture as a point of departure, but they approach it with a contextual hermeneutical theory rather than a literal one. Moreover, in general, they attempt to emphasise the authority of the Qurʾan and minimise that of Hadith. Their common argument is that the former is divinely revealed, hence has a binding status in so far as they interpret it; whereas the latter is the work of humans, hence not immune from imperfection. The Apologists' discourse, however, is not internally coherent. In their attempt to take Islamic authenticity away from the Islamists, they themselves engage in Islamist-like selectivity. In what follows, I illustrate this selectivity by drawing on the approaches of two Apologists, Muhammad Saʿid ʿAshmawi and Muhammad Shahrour.

Muhammad Saʿid ʿAshmawi's book *al-Islām al-Siyāsī* (Political Islam), published in 1987, is one of the early works expressing the

Apologist spirit. ʿAshmawi wants to be faithful to Islamic teachings and at the same time cleanse Islam from politics. In doing so, he emphasises the divine dimension of Islam – so divine, he claims, that it is difficult to transfer it to worldly affairs without it being corrupted by the (imperfect) interests of people:

> God willed it that Islam be a religion, people willed it to be political. Religion is inclusive (*ʿāmm*), humanistic and comprehensive; whereas politics is restricted, limited, tribal, local and ephemeral . . . Religion brings out the highest [qualities] in a person and the most noble of what he can achieve, whereas politics elicits in him the lowest of what he can degenerate into.[53]

ʿAshmawi uses his distinction between the realm of God as opposed to the wordly one to justify removing Islam from political affairs, that is, to differentiate between the Qurʾan, as a divine revelation, and the rest of the traditional Islamic corpus, for example, Hadith and its jurisprudential development, *fiqh.* The latter he describes as no more than the work of humans; it does not have a divine status nor should it, therefore, have a binding practical status. In this sense, *fiqh* is to be understood as a body of work based on revelation but applied to the historical circumstances to which the jurists (*fuqahāʾ*) were responding.

ʿAshmawi then argues that the Qurʾan does not contain anything that can lend itself to the principles upon which a constitution is to be founded. In this, ʿAshmawi seeks to import or apply the Qurʾan to modern political notions and practices. Accordingly, he holds that nothing can be found in it that can instruct on how to organise the leadership of the Muslims – method of election, people's participation in the political process, oversight mechanisms, etc. [54] As far as ʿAshmawi is concerned, when 'it is said that the Qurʾan is a constitution, it is being said by way of a metaphor' or else it amounts to no more than empty rhetorical slogans.

The central theme that defines an Islamic state is justice, ʿAshmawi argues. 'Every government that seeks to realise political, social and judicial justice is an Islamic government', he asserts. To apply *reductio ad absurdum* to his assertion, one might ask whether if a pagan government sought to realise justice, could it be considered an Islamic government? ʿAshmawi, though, is more interested in the rhetorical effect that his discourse might have rather than its internal coherence. To add an 'Islamic' weight to his rhetoric, ʿAshmawi cites a hadith report, 'political rule may prevail over idolatry, but it won't

prevail over injustice'.[55] This is somewhat ironic, given that he minimised the authority of Hadith; he is happy to draw on it to his own convenience.

Muhammad Shahrour is another example of an Apologist with a selective approach. Like ʿAshmawi, he wants to minimise the binding authority of the Hadith in matters pertaining to politics. His selective approach is tied to an elaborate and complex approach that he devises to the understanding of the Qur'an. Shahrour notes that given that the Hadith is the collection of the reports of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet and distinct from the revealed Qur'anic sayings, its authority has been established not by God but by humankind and thus cannot be said to be binding.[56] Based on this assumption, Shahrour dismisses, for example, any binding authority of a hadith in which the Prophet said: 'A people who entrust their affairs (i.e. rule) to a woman will not prosper.'[57] Yet ironically, in support of Muslim women's participation in the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women, Shahrour resorts to a hadith by the Prophet said to be in favour of open dialogue:

> This positive outcome (i.e. expressing opinion publicly in the Beijing conference) is not in any way alien to our beliefs as Muslims. We will never forget the slogan – political, intellectual and social – with which the Prophet Muhammad confronted the polytheists: 'Don't block the way between me and my people.'[58]

Shahrour's selective approach is not limited to the Hadith; he extends it to the Qur'an.[59] For him, not all of the Qur'an is binding in political affairs. Muhammad, he notes, occupies three roles: the human, the Prophetic and the specific role as Messenger, in which obedience is required. Obedience, Shahrour argues, is binding only in Muhammad's capacity as a Messenger. He observes that all the verses in the Qur'an that command obedience (*ṭāʿa*) are not those in which Muhammad is designated as a human or as a Prophet but only in those in which he is designated as a Messenger (*rasūl*). As a human, Muhammad was an Arab, lived with his people and was of good character, but nothing of this should serve as a basis upon which one should legislate. As a Prophet, the Qur'an was the expression of his prophecy, and:

> The foundation of the book (*umm al-kitāb*) is his *message* (i.e., the laws). [Further] the Prophet did not explain his prophecy to anybody, because his prophecy consists of the ambiguous/problematic (*al-mutashābihāt*) verses, those that are open to

> allegorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*) according to time and historical development. They represent the articles of the [Islamic] creed, and no law may be legislated on their basis.[60]

And so, Shahrour continues, those verses that begin by invoking Muhammad as a Prophet (*yā ayyuha al-nabiyy*) are to be understood as providing directions or instructions (*taʿlīmāt*), but not commandments.[61] The verses that command obedience are of two kinds. The first kind is obedience to the Prophet when the verses are connected to obedience to God. Examples of this kind of obedience are apparent in such verses like 'obey God and His Messenger'. These verses pertain to laws about worship (*ʿibādāt*), e.g. prayers and almsgiving; they do not undergo change, but should not be confused with rules pertaining to political affairs. What the learned men (*ʿulamāʾ*) did, Shahrour argues, was to legislate laws about prayers and almsgiving following the model of the Prophet, then wrongly continued to deduce from his sayings and deeds other matters that were not meant to be modelled on those of the Prophet.

The second kind is the obedience that is not connected to God and is to be found in verses such as (Q. 4: 59) 'obey God, obey His Messenger and those who have authority over you'. This verse, Shahrour believes, indicates a separation in kind between the obedience to God and that to the Prophet. It does not pertain to the *ʿibādāt* category but to human relations (*muʿāmalāt*) including the political sphere. But such verses command obedience to the prophet *only* during his lifetime. Shahrour believes that one observes an amalgamation between the Prophet and 'those with authority over you' (*ʾūlī al-ʾamr ʿalaykum*) for the command to obey, but a separation in kind for the obedience to God. He concludes that a confusion between *ʿibādāt* and *muʿāmālāt* by the *ʿulamāʾ* has led to the wrong application or imposition of laws derived from the foundation texts on the conduct of political affairs.

In relation to minimising the authority of the Hadith, the argument of ʿAshmawi and Shahrour that Muhammad is a human and that one therefore cannot legislate eternal laws following his model might initially seem plausible. But if this is so evident, even from a religious standpoint, why were the sayings of Muhammad often invoked by the early community of Muslims (i.e. those who were close in time to Muhammad and, one assumes, knew better) to disagree in or resolve matters pertaining to political affairs? Indeed, it was a saying of Muhammad that was used to resolve the very first political disagreement in Islam pertaining to the succession of the Prophet. When Muhammad died, his close followers (*al-anṣār*) were about

to appoint as successor Saʿd Ibn ʿUbāda, a strong supporter and campaigner for Muhammad. Abū Bakr and ʿUmar objected, quoting the Prophet that the Imamate should belong to the Quraysh tribe.[62] Moreover, following ʿAshmawi's and Shahrour's line of reasoning, what should be made of Qurʾanic verses that delegate the legislation of law through Muhammad? (e.g. Q. 8: 24; 59: 5)

As for Shahrour's case for separating politics from the Qurʾan, it can be considered as an internally coherent argument only within a selective approach that disposes of two-thirds of what Muhammad stands for, and leaves one-third that meets Shahrour's objective. Even within this selective approach, Shahrour is also arbitrary in deciding which verses are open to allegorical interpretation, even though the Qurʾan does not explicitly indicate which verses are *mutashābihāt* and which are to be understood literally (*muḥkamāt*).

If promoting democracy and liberal values is what should decide the merit of a discourse, then it is appealing to support the Apologists' claims. Accordingly, it would be convenient to cleanse religions from any off-putting characteristics, especially those to do with war, and look at religious edicts as always commensurate with peace and harmony. But to accept uncritically the Apologists' claims amounts to favouritism based not on the substance of their discourse but on the political agenda to be obtained through it. Even if one were to go along with the political objective, the discourse of the Apologists is weak and does not withstand scrutiny. For it is just as selective as that of the Islamists, and thus does not provide an internally coherent intellectual basis to support their claims.

Some scholars of Islamic studies from outside the Muslim community tend to identify Islam with this discourse. Shahrour, for example, has been hailed by Dale Eickelman as a great modern Muslim reformer, and potentially the Muslim equivalent of Martin Luther.[63] Eickelman pursues yet another selective line with regard to his preferred view of Islam. In discussing what he calls the 'Islamic Reformation', he quotes the following (Q. 5: 48):

> To each among you, We have prescribed a law and a way for acting. If God had so willed, he might have made you a single community, but [he has not done so] that he may test you in what he has given you; so compete in goodness.

This verse, Eickelman contends, 'appears to give a final answer to the role of the Muslim community in a multi-community world'.[64]

Eickelman and others generally stress the significance of the verses they choose in almost the same way the Islamists stress theirs, and in this sense, they are simply on a par with the Islamists in the credibility of their discourse. Between the Islamists and the Apologists a battle of verses is at play. In some respects, the way the debate is conducted fits a pre-Islamic dictum that says that the liar of one's own tribe is better than the one who tells the truth from another rival tribe.[65]

Critique

It is not difficult to discern that the Apologists' concern to modernise Islam, which sits at the centre of their discourse, is sometimes about Westernising and secularising Islam under the banner of Scripture. To borrow Fazlur Rahman's words '[m]any of them are secularists at heart but have not made their viewpoints explicit to any appreciable degree'.[66] This is not to suggest that Muslim thinkers should avoid taking on board and even assimilating non-Islamic habits and ideas. But there is a significant difference between making Westernisation and secularism part of the intellectual consciousness of and the elaboration of an Islamic discourse, as opposed to making them the tacit objectives of that discourse.

There is nothing wrong or unusual about thinkers being selective in their choice of sources in order to advance their points of views. But for this selectivity to be convincing, it cannot be followed by assertive claims. It needs to leave room for disagreement. Most of the Islamists and Apologists, however, are not prepared to concede that alternative views might exist, and their views therefore do not allow a space for disagreement with the opposing side. They have a reified idea of Islam, which each current claims as its own. Common among the proponents of these two currents but especially strong among the Islamists, is to brand their views as 'Islamic' and move on to claim authenticity (*aṣāla*) and seek to monopolise the debate for their side.

Turki al-Hamad and ʿAli Harb view the tendency to resort frequently to 'Islamic' as a label as a phenomenon peculiar to contemporary discourses. Hamad, for instance, compares the titles of political treatises by prominent classical Muslim thinkers with contemporary ones. He remarks that the term 'Islamic' is often absent in classical titles (e.g. by Māwardī, Ibn Taymiyya, etc.) but is prevalent in contemporary ones (e.g. Qutb, Mawdudi, etc.).[67] In a similar vein, ʿAli Harb notes that unlike the classical writers who generally approached

their subjects from a theoretical perspective, going beyond their socio-cultural and religious surroundings, contemporary Arab thinkers tend to exercise their intellectual activities through the limited angle of cultural, national or religious affiliation.[68]

While many contemporary discourses are, then, eager to ground their views in the medieval tradition to give their claims an aura of authenticity (*aṣāla*), they seem less eager to borrow a spirit that was characteristic of medieval debates. In classical treatises, statements such as 'God knows best' (*allāhu aʿlam*) or 'there are at least two ways of thinking about it', etc. are often used to conclude an argument by different sides. The contemporary stance, however, is one that is assertive of its claims to truth. In other words, the intellectual circumspection of many past figures is now replaced by assertive assumptions.

The variety of schools of thought in the Islamic tradition, medieval and modern, revolves around and finds legitimacy by means of *ikhtilāf* (disagreement), be it a conscious or an unconscious accommodation. In the introduction to his treatise on the differences among Muslims (*Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn*), Ashʿarī writes:

> After the death of their Prophet, the [Muslim] people differed in many matters, in which some of them deceived each other, while others disavowed [association] from one another and they turned into dissimilar groups and dispersed parties, however Islam unites and contains them all.[69]

The term *ikhtilāf* means adopting a position different from others either in views or actions, and the history of the Islamic tradition is marked by many such differences (*ikhtilāfāt*). [70] Some have become institutionalised, as in the case of the four schools of law; others have largely disappeared, as in the case of the Khawārij, yet have still left their intellectual imprint, even on what is considered mainstream Islamic thought.[71] Ann Elizabeth Mayer observes that tolerance of major differences of opinion is a striking feature of pre-modern Islam. She notes that 'Law cases would produce quite different results depending on which school's doctrine was being used', adding that major differences were also accepted and accommodated even within the same school of law.[72] The fourteenth-century historian Ibn Khaldūn tells of the diversity of views in Islamic jurisprudence and of the ways they were managed:

> It should be known that the jurisprudence described, which is based upon religious evidence, involves many differences of

> opinion among scholars of independent judgment. Differences of opinion result from the different sources they use and their different outlooks, and are unavoidable, as we have stated before. (These differences) occupied a very large space in Islam.[73]

At times, Muslims were interested in converting non-Muslims through what may be considered as intellectual proselytising. For example, the Muʿtazilite theologian Abū al-Hudhayl (*c.* CE 751–849) is said to have debated with Zoroastrians and Manichaens and, through debating with them, converted around 3,000 men to Islam.[74]

This is not to romanticise the history of the Islamic tradition by suggesting that civilised *ikhtilāf* is its sole characteristic. *Ikhtilāf* was the cause of bloody episodes as well as intellectual polemics. Muslims fought each other because of differences whether in ideology or the pursuit of power and, at times, they accused each other of disbelief (*kufr*) for differences of opinion. But as Taha Jabir al-ʿAlawani noted, 'if differences of opinion operate in a healthy framework they could enrich the Muslim mind and stimulate intellectual development'.[75] And as the Egyptian poet Ahmad Shawqi nicely puts it, 'Differences of opinion need amity not spoil.'[76] Ibn Khaldūn described the disputations in jurisprudence as having 'clarified the sources of the authorities as well as the motives of their differences'.[77] Considering its encompassing and inclusive potential, *ikhtilāf* is a concept that may be developed to the advantage of all groups, including the non-religious camp. One illustration of healthy acknowledgement of *ikhtilāf* is Fazlur Rahman's prefatory note to his book *Islam and Modernity*. In it, Rahman notes the passing of two Pakistani intellectuals, Abu al-Aʿla Mawdudi and Ishtiaq Husayn Qureshi, with whom he had stark intellectual disagreement. Nevertheless, he writes, 'their departure is a loss to Islam, despite my severe, and I believe perfectly justified, criticism of them'.[78]

Conclusion

The Islamists' and the Apologists' currents are competing as to which of them stands for a true or authentic Islam. This chapter has outlined the main claims and assumptions these two currents advance in their interpretations of the Islamic tradition, by canvassing the ideas of a number of thinkers representative of both currents. It has shown that while both currents claim to be faithful to the true teachings of Islam, they are both selective in their approaches to Scriptures, and are thus tightly circumscribed in their considerations of political issues. In

Islam, one might say that God reveals himself through words, a sign of a healthy intellectual 'revelation' that offers a fertile soil to intellectual disagreement (*ikhtilāf*). Having argued that resorting to selective quotations from religious sources does not make one's case any more credible or legitimate than that of one's opponent, perhaps one might still cite, in a constructive and inclusive spirit, a hadith by the Prophet to that effect: 'Disagreements within my community are a divine mercy.'

2 The Intellectuals and the tradition

> Perhaps the main reason for the contemporary reactionary attitude (*radda*) [in the Arab-Islamic world] has to do with the fact that the revolution against the absolute ruler (*sulṭān*) preceded the revolution against the strict adherence to the tradition (*taqlīd*) . . . This deadlock over *taqlīd* protected the tyranny of rulers . . . and obstructed innovation (*tajdīd*). *Taqlīd* is the 'hero' of the [Arab] nation, it alone has not experienced defeat for longer than five decades. . . .
>
> The Arabs failed to fathom (*iktināh*) modernity in the same way they failed in their pursuit of freedom. They have for long associated modernity with the external enemy, and so it became difficult for them to seek the remedy from those whom they considered to be the source of the illness. That's how the Arabs and Muslims lost both freedom and modernity.
>
> ʿIsam Naʿman[1]

The Intellectuals make up the third Arabic current in the contest over what the *turāth* stands for. They too are battling for a share in the *turāth*, which they are seeking to import to the contemporary scene. In this chapter, I survey a sample of views and arguments of a number of Intellectuals, focusing in particular on the works of Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman and Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabiri. I argue that there is a strong tendency in the Intellectuals' discourse to subordinate the history of and methods in philosophy to advance what they deem as solutions to contemporary political problems.

Relevance of examining the Intellectuals' discourse

Arab Intellectuals present themselves as being *critically* engaged in the study of the Arabic-Islamic tradition. While they do not always

agree on all issues pertaining to the study and interpretation of the tradition, they do commonly agree about the need to mount a challenge to the Islamists' interpretation of the tradition. The increasing dominance of the Islamists' discourse, which is tied to an emphasis on the religious current of the *turāth*, at the exclusion of other currents, has led the Intellectuals to advocate a stronger focus on the philosophical component of the tradition (*al-turāth al-falsafī*).[2] A modern philosophical method that sheds light on Islamic philosophy, so runs the argument, will counter-balance the seemingly rigid understanding of the *turāth* that is reflected in the emphasis on its religious aspects. This kind of approach, the argument continues, will allow the *turāth* to be contemporaneous with the present, in such a way that its positive aspects may be put to use for the purposes of contemporary aspirations.[3]

The debate on this subject is vigorous in Arabic writings. There is also a growing interest outside the Arab intellectual scene – especially among scholars interested in the study of the role of Islam in politics – in favour of how Intellectuals are analysing and interpreting the Arabic-Islamic tradition. Underlying this praise is an approval of the Intellectuals' critique of the quasi-monopoly over the interpretation of Islam by the Islamists. There is also an implicit approval that these Intellectuals are bringing more emphasis not on the religious current of the tradition but on its philosophical current. And, given that these Intellectuals are generally teaching scholars at universities, their discourse is seen to radiate an aura of credibility.

Arab Intellectuals and politics

Any critique of the discourse of Arab Intellectuals must take into account the political conditions within which these individuals and other Arab thinkers operate. That is, they cannot simply be perceived and judged in the same way 'public intellectuals' are judged in the West, for Arab thinkers do not operate within the same 'public' space that intellectuals in the West generally enjoy. The public space within which Arab thinkers operate is confined, or at least conditioned, by domestic and foreign factors, both of which are seen by them to be tied to political/ideological settings that feed off each other.

The *domestic* political culture of the Arab world is characterised by the 'forbidden' (*mamnūʿ*). That is, all thinkers must bear in mind the implications of their discourse on their (de facto) relationship with the state. It is not an exaggeration to say that for those who live

in the Arab world, the *word* is a luxury the price of which is at times paid for in blood currency. Arab thinkers have written extensively on the relationship between the Intellectual and the state (*al-muthaqqaf wa al-sulṭa*). Khalid al-Kirki, Professor of Arabic Literature in Jordan and a former politician, rightly observes that Arab thinkers must at all times bear in mind the implications of their works for their relationship with the state. In many instances, they find that first and foremost it is 'expected of them to recognise the legitimacy of the state and to defend it', and that it is forbidden for them to criticise or reject its values.[4] Indeed, al-Kirki is not playing with words when he states that the intellectual horizon of Arab thinkers provides them with four options:

> To be guided by the dream option, with all its wideness, beauty, freedom and towering [features]; to be guided by the authority of the state (*al-sulṭa*) with its objects of suspicion: its wooden or golden bridges [concealing] the reality of its whips and prisons; the option [to be guided by the spirit of] the people with their aspirations and anxieties, their patience, hunger and perplexity; or to be guided by God, the Great and Exalted, by His certainty, sufism/mysticism, trust and auspiciousness. Here falls the anxiety in the souls of innovators, because the freedom of movement in Arab societies is confined, and the loaf of bread and dignity are dependent on all of these options.[5]

Perhaps al-Kirki even underestimates how dangerous it is for thinkers to consider God as simple an option as he suggests. Shortly before the Iraq war (2003), the Lebanese-based newspaper *al-Nahār* published a piece by ʿAql al-ʿAwit, a Lebanese writer, entitled 'A Letter to God'. ʿAwit's letter is an emotional and desperate appeal to God pleading Him to intervene and save the oppressed people of the world, including the Iraqis who were facing a critical point in their history. ʿAwit's appeal to God was not in the form of a submissive believer's prayer to an omnipotent Being. Instead of a prayer, ʿAwit wrote God a 'letter' challenging His very existence in view of the injustice which the author believes to be the norm in the world. The following excerpt reflects the overall tone of the letter:

> If you are truly a God, act appropriately to what your divine status commands, and ask not for anything in return.

> Why, O God – whether we believe in you or not – do you forfeit your divinity? Why have you become weak, cowardly and helpless?[6]

Following its publication, the office of a Sunni religious authority (*Dār al-Fatwā*) in Tripoli, Lebanon, issued a statement accusing the author of disbelief (*kufr*), and demanding that the Lebanese government should refer ʿAwit and the newspaper to the court of justice for having committed a crime against the constitution. On the basis of the statement, the Prosecutor-General submitted the case to court. The editors of *al-Nahār* had to carry out intense negotiations and mount a challenge to the case in order to resolve the issue. This incident is by no means atypical of the kind of domestic pressure Arab thinkers regularly face; in fact, in this case the pressure was not that heavy, since ʿAwit is still writing for the same newspaper.

The other major sources of confinement for Intellectuals, after *domestic* factors, are *foreign* factors. The Intellectuals consider that the Western dominant power imposes a uniform/universal philosophy by virtue of its global political success. The political malaise of the Arab world is seen as part of, and as a result of, this Western project. In addition, there is also an attitude that Western writings on the subject of the Arabic-Islamic tradition should not be dissociated from the Western imperial agenda.

The restrictive domestic space plays a role in how these external political factors are perceived. Hasan Nafaa (Professor of Political Science at Cairo University) emphasises that the domestic constraints facing Arab thinkers feed off external ones. For they are conscious of the fact that they are not simply coerced into being servants to their Arab leaders, but that their leaders are themselves subservient to external powers, which Nafaa calls the 'American master'.[7] Nafaa is not suggesting that Arab leaders are actually the victims of an external conspiracy. He wants to highlight that Arab thinkers do not simply acquire intellectual freedom by joining forces with the West where less constraint is imposed on freedom. In other words, Nafaa's view is that the freedom preached in the West does not necessarily entail a universal freedom; rather, it comes at the expense of the freedom of others. While I do not wish to ignore the political factors constraining the free expression of Arab Intellectuals, such factors are not enough to excuse the unwarranted directions that some political considerations assume, at times, in the Intellectuals' discourse on their readings of the *turāth*.

Signposts for a new philosophy: Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman

The discourse of Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman, Professor of Logic and Philosophy of Language at the University of Rabat-Morocco, is an example of an Intellectual who is engaged not in philosophy, as he wants his readers to believe, but in the politicisation of philosophy. Rahman starts by considering what he deems to be the appropriate modern and new approach for a philosopher. The new approach, he believes, is one that ought to be characterised by posing the 'responsible question' (*al-suʾāl al-masʾūl*).[8] This form of question, he explains, should be understood to differ both from the 'Socratic question', whereby the examination of the subject matter is sought by means of posing the question, and from the 'Kantian question', whereby the question carries within itself a critique of the subject matter. Rahman's 'responsible question' is a 'question that asks about its [ontological] status as a question in as much as it asks about its subject matter': in Socratic parlance, it is a question that 'examines its status in the same way it examines its subject matter'; in Kantian parlance, it is a 'question that critiques its status in the same way it critiques its subject matter'.[9]

Rahman explains, more specifically, that this new approach requires that the philosopher be conscious of his ethical role, and in that, he is a philosopher by being 'responsible' before being a 'questioner'. This also entails taking into consideration the following: 'Why does one ask? About what does one ask? Whom does one ask? Why is it necessary to answer? About what is it necessary to answer? To whom is it necessary to answer?' In other words, by virtue of this 'responsibility' the 'question' gains a necessary ethical dimension.[10]

With these considerations in mind, Rahman argues that the role of the Arab philosopher is not to imitate others by engaging in the same question that they engage in. Instead, he should pose only that question that out of responsibility he should pose and out of responsibility he should answer. And this should only happen in order 'to liberate the Arabic philosophical discourse and open the horizons for innovation in it'. In doing so, Arab philosophers must problematise two notions: (a) the notion that the philosopher's mission is to direct his intellectual energy towards the goal of achieving 'universal thought' (*al-fikr al-wāḥid*) and (b) the notion that the philosopher should accept the political circumstances of his cultural surrounding as a premise, a *fait accompli* (*al-amr al-wāqiʿ*)[11]:

(a) *Universal thought*: whereas it has been customary for the philosopher to seek to bring together various forms of knowledge dispersed among various cultures, nowadays, Rahman argues, the philosopher's mission should be the opposite. His mission is not to resist differences in knowledge, but to resist the equalisation of knowledge (*al-taswiya al-thaqāfiyya*). The latter, he claims, is nothing but an imposition by power of one form of knowledge, namely the knowledge of the most powerful (*thaqāfat al-aqwā*) on all the other cultures that differ from it.[12] The premise of 'universal thought', Rahman opines, goes against the principle of responsibility in philosophy that gives the philosopher the mission to liberate the process of thinking. It also goes against the very process of philosophising, in that it ultimately moves towards an intellectual environment characterised by a consensus of ideas, whereas philosophising should be characterised by disagreement.[13]

(b) *Fait accompli*: while 'universal thought' is a form of cultural hegemony, *fait accompli* is a political notion by which a political hegemony is imposed. Rahman argues that these two notions are tied together. This is so because even though philosophy can be confined by the limits of a single culture, it nevertheless remains a cultural expression, and even though philosophy is never a political expression, it deals with various matters pertaining to politics. This natural link between the two means that the politics of the most powerful can transpose its own categories and conditions on the philosophy of the less powerful, thus subjugating the latter to its own political directions and agenda, and ultimately leading it to an inevitable death. In other words, whereas in philosophy there is no compulsion in anything, the notion of *fait accompli* carries within it a compulsion to accept the reality imposed by the most powerful.[14]

The 'universal' philosophical tradition

Rahman's concern over the Arab cultural expression leads him to examine what is regarded as the 'universal' philosophical tradition and how it relates to or threatens Arabic philosophy. He sees 'universal philosophy' as nothing more than a national philosophy based on the Judaic tradition that is being exploited for political purposes.[15] Judaic influence, he holds, having made its mark on 'universal philosophy' long ago by way of Greek philosophy,[16] then made its way into European – especially German – philosophy, ultimately leading to the judaisation (*tahwīd*) of 'universal philosophy'.[17] It was Heidegger

who, with his ontological philosophy, sought to return to the pre-Platonic philosophers to rectify this inappropriate Judaeo-Christian heritage of what is meant to be 'universal philosophy'. Heidegger soon came under severe criticism and did not see his project fulfilled. What we have then, so Rahman argues, is nothing but a Judaic heritage that is exploited for political purposes.[18] When the Arab philosopher takes part in this universal philosophy, he is being unconsciously led to think in a manner in which his 'enemy' wants him to think, and which will eventually lead him to his death, at least culturally and intellectually.[19] The need for a distinct Arabic philosophy is therefore not an intellectual luxury but a means for survival. Based on my readings, this kind of analysis is not common to Arab Intellectuals, and the book in which Rahman advances these views, *The Arabic Right to Disagreement in Philosophy*, is a recent publication (2002) that I am yet to find reactions to.

Rahman's approach stems from a reaction to existing studies that examine the tradition from what he regards as a fragmentary perspective. In his other writings, he states that his aim is to offer a perspective that examines the tradition as a whole, using tools that are indigenous (*maʾṣūla*) to the tradition and ultimately leading to establishing what is authentic (*al-maʿārif al-aṣliyya*) as distinct from what is transmitted knowledge (*al-maʿārif al-manqūla*) in the tradition.[20] But his method is one-sided and narrow and does not allow for the notion of knowledge acculturation. Leibnitz (CE 1646–1716), Rahman notes, was heavily influenced by the Jewish philosopher Maimonides (CE 1135–1204). Yet Rahman completely fails to note what is inescapably evident in Maimonides' writings, which is the heavy influence of the teachings of Muslim philosophers and theologians. In a similar vein, it has been argued by Taha Hussein that there exist many similarities between the teachings of the Muʿtazilites, the early Muslim theologians, and Leibnitz.[21]

Whereas other Intellectuals go around the religious component of the tradition and comment on it as if they are outside it, Rahman develops his argument using a (universal) philosophical method, void of any religious connotations. But to him, it goes without saying that this method is not alien to the religious tradition, because he considers this to be a nationalist mission, and therefore is of the characteristics that make up Arab (national and cultural) philosophy. As such, his discourse – to use his own way of thinking – culminates by natural philosophical progression in upholding the national (religious) tradition.

It is not difficult to present a critique of Rahman's arguments and reject them using the very premises he uses. Suffice to say that Rahman gives a priority of claim to the (local) political concerns over the (universal) pursuits in the study of philosophy, and in this he himself corners philosophy into being a *fait accompli* of a political order. The point here is not to engage in polemics, but to bring to the fore the political element that runs through this discourse. In highlighting the political underpinnings external and internal to this discourse, I am not suggesting that Rahman or other Intellectuals are concealing the cultural political agenda attached to their works or that they are not conscious of it. Rahman, for example, grounds the Arabic philosophy he aspires to establish in the Israeli–Palestinian context. In so doing, he reduces philosophy from the universal to the local (political), yet at the same time he ends up universalising a contemporary political problem. For instance, he does not use terms indicating particularity, such as Zionist (*ṣahyūniyya*); instead he resorts to terms that are closer to the universal than they are to the particular, like 'Judaisation'. The outcome of Rahman's method is not a distinct Arabic philosophy, but more of a conspiracy–philosophy theory that is meant to appeal to popular political lines. In Rahman's parlance, his discourse qualifies as an 'irresponsible' answer to a problem.

On the problématique of the tradition: Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabiri

Jabiri, a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Rabat-Morocco, presents himself as an Intellectual with a project to interpret critically (*mashrūʿ naqdī*) the Islamic tradition and with the mission to accomplish an intellectual project (*mashrūʿ fikrī*).[22] He has written extensively (though repetitively) on the subject of the *turāth*, his books have generated numerous responses from other Arab thinkers,[23] and he is perhaps one of the Intellectuals most frequently cited outside the Arab world.[24]

Jabiri is of the view that the current state of Arab intellectual awareness of the tradition is characterised by irrationality (*allāʿaqlāniyya*).[25] This necessitates that a new interpretation of the *turāth* be developed, one that uses a method that deconstructs its texts, allowing them to be given a modern reading.[26] Some aspects of Jabiri's work provide an important contribution to the way the *turāth* is epistemologically conceived in contemporary discourses. He points out the ideological underpinnings that are latent in the epistemological structure that makes up the history of the Arabic-Islamic tradition. He remarks that

the term *turāth* has never had more currency in Arabic thought than in the twentieth century (onward). He also notes that its early historical usage carried the meaning of inheritance,[27] and its contemporary usage adds an ideological and cultural meaning to the term. Whereas the older usage meaning 'inheritance' implied 'the disappearance of the father and the advent of his son in his place', the contemporary meaning implies 'the presence of the father in the son, the presence of the predecessor in the successor, the presence of the past in the present'.[28] It simultaneously encompasses the cognitive and the ideological, so that the term *turāth* now carries the meaning of a cultural, intellectual, religious, literary and artistic legacy enveloped in some sort of an ideological empathy.[29]

The reason for this cognitive and ideological amalgam in the meaning of *turāth*, Jabiri holds, relates to the fact that this usage is a product of the modern Arab renaissance (*nahḍa*) discourse (late nineteenth to early twentieth century). Like the discourse of other reform movements, he explains, Arab renaissance discourse used the *turāth* as a support mechanism to bring about genuine reform. By calling for a 'return' to the teachings and principles of the *turāth*, they had hoped this would in turn allow them to critique both the present and the past, and move in a progressive manner thereafter to the future. But this 'return' to tradition was at the same time used as a defence mechanism against the challenges and threats posed by the external Western world against the existence of the Arab 'nation'. The coinciding of an Arab renaissance with the challenges posed by the West saw the reformers' intellectual energy focused on a 'return' to the tradition. This resulted in a strict adherence to the past to give strength to the present, instead of it being used as a means by which that discourse can move to the future.[30]

Jabiri makes other insightful observations that have consequences for the epistemological structure of Arabic thought. He notes that there exists a restrictive terminology in Islamic intellectual discourse, which is manifest in the attribution of a quasi-feudal character to Islamic history and Arabic thought. Arabic history, poetry and literature, for example, are understood and analysed according to a chronology of the rule of family dynasties (e.g. Umayyads, Abbasids). For Jabiri, this closed terminology and its limiting connotations reflects not so much an inconsistency in ideological choices but an indication of the absence of epistemological stability, a stability that is crucial to intellectual progress.

As an extension to this restricted terminology, Jabiri highlights the absence of an epoch of 'ancient' civilisation in the structure of the

intellectual history of Arabic thought. That is to say, one talks of Arabic civilisation only with reference to the medieval and contemporary eras, even though there is an *ancient* epoch that gives sense to the term 'middle' in the Middle Ages.[31] This point is of crucial significance. Not only does this omission rob the Islamic tradition of perhaps the chief and most important intellectual influence of its formative and middle periods but it also places it outside and alien to the European and currently dominant intellectual tradition. Generally, for example, the European tradition links its high points to its classical Greco-Roman epoch, and downgrades its standard of intellectual achievements in reference to its medieval epoch. The Islamic tradition, on the other hand, experienced its high points in medieval times, during which it was influenced also by the Greek tradition, an aspect that is now overlooked or not given due consideration, especially in 'clash of civilisation' discourses.

Solutions to problems

Jabiri conceives of three systems of knowledge that form the basis of what he terms the Arabic intellect:

1 A system based on the art of rhetoric (*al-niẓām al-bayānī*), a branch of knowledge that encompasses the linguistic and religious sciences. In Jabirian parlance this qualifies as the Arabic-religious intelligible (*al-maʿqūl al-dīnī al-ʿarabī*), a system that is typically indigenous to the Arabic intellect;[32]
2 A system of cognition (*niẓām al-ʿirfān*), a branch of knowledge foreign (*dakhīl*) to Arabic intellect of neo-Platonic imprint developed mainly by the various Shīʿite sects (e.g. the Ismāʿīlīs, Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, etc). It is characterised by an esoteric and non-rational approach to knowledge and preoccupied by a concern for the after-life instead of worldly affairs and, for Jabiri, it qualifies as the non-intelligible intellect (*allā-maʿqūl al-ʿaqlī*);[33]
3 A system of demonstration (*al-niẓām al-burhānī*), a branch of knowledge based on Greek thought and qualifying as the intelligible intellect (*al-maʿqūl al-ʿaqlī*).[34]

According to Jabiri, at some historical point in the Islamic tradition, just before Averroes (d. CE 1198), who stands at the pinnacle of Arabic rationalism as inspired and influenced by Greek thought (3), systems (1) and (2) became assimilated. Therefore, the foreign system of cognition with its reliance on dreams and its non-rational epistemological

foundation came to acquire an ideological clout and a progressive stance in Islamic societies. As a result, it replaced the need for the third system of knowledge, demonstrative knowledge, and it is this attitude that led to the decline (*inḥiṭāṭ*) in the Arabic intellect.[35]

From the perspective of today's world, Jabiri calls for a contemporaneous (*ḥadāthī*) understanding of the *turāth* to replace the prevailing 'traditional understanding of the tradition' (*al-fahm al-turāthī li al-turāth*).[36] He identifies three approaches that qualify as traditional in the sense that they give excessive weight to the intellectual assets of the teachings of the ancestors (*al-salaf*) and permeate most approaches to the *turāth*. They fall under the following headings:

1 Traditional *salafiyya*: this approach is characteristic of the religious approach. Its understanding of knowledge (*maʿrifa*) about the *turāth* is characterised by transcription (*istinsākh*) and participation in (*inkhirāṭ*) the problematics of what is being read (*maqrūʾ*) of the sacred texts and surrendering to it.[37] As such, this approach places the present in a position of being encompassed by the past, instead of the other way around.
2 Orientalist *salafiyya*: there are two sides to this approach. The first is linked to imperialism, the roots of which go back to the medieval conflicts between Islam and Christianity. It labels Arabic Islamic thought as the 'Semitic mind', and implies that the Islamic religion is sterile when it comes to science and philosophy, and accordingly restricts the scope for rational thinking. The second is linked to the period of the Enlightenment, during which the study of the Orient or oriental studies became an important pursuit. This, he notes, was driven by two goals: (a) an interest in the re-writing of intellectual European thought in a manner that would allow it a sense of unity and continuity (*waḥda wa-istimrāriyya*); and (b) making the history of European thought into a general and universal history. These goals, Jabiri argues, formed the framework within which all Orientalists, including Arab academics who follow this approach, were approaching the *turāth*. The Orientalist *salafiyya* shares the characteristic of the first approach in so far as conformity or subordination (*tabaʿiyya*) is concerned.[38]
3 Marxist *salafiyya*: this approach is explicit about its borrowed model, i.e. being the Marxist tradition, and conscious of its subordination/conformity (*tabaʿiyya*) to it. What, in Jabiri's view, this approach is not conscious of, however, is that its historical materialism (*al-māddiyya al-tārīkhiyya*) also operates tacitly

within the Orientalist approach, in that it is part of the same Eurocentric endeavour that seeks to universalise European thought. Another problem with this approach is that it does not want to live its present, it just wants to transcend it.[39]

In order for the *turāth* to play a constructive role in the present, Jabiri proposes an epistemological rupture (*qaṭīʿa*) from this emphasis on the predecessors (*al-salaf*). The alternative intellectual approach he advocates involves:

1 a structural analysis (*taḥlīl bunyawī*) that approaches any thinker's work as a whole;
2 an historical analysis (*taḥlīl tārīkhī*) that relates the traditional texts to their historical contexts;
3 an ideological analysis that takes into account the professional stance the thinker in question assigned to himself in the intellectual domain of his time, and the purpose for which he deployed his knowledge. This aspect, according to Jabiri, should help uncover the ideological component of the traditional texts and serve as the principal means of understanding the *turāth* in a manner contemporary with itself.[40]

(Mis)representation of the tradition?

Jabiri's discourse is underpinned by a strong commitment to Arab nationalism, but some of his analyses provide a critical and plausible insight into the dynamics behind the excessive preoccupation with tradition and the stalling of reforms in the Arab world. From this point of departure, however, he proceeds to provide an un-critical reading of the *turāth*, which, according to his own classification, would qualify under the 'Orientalist' approach. In other words, his analysis of the content of the tradition does not conform to the methodology he himself sets out.

According to Jabiri, Islam in its early history was an ideology that 'secured secular dominance' by managing to quell rival factions and sublimate them. But with the advent of the Abbasid dynasty (CE 750–1258), in its early years, it had to confront the hostile elements by the Persian aristocracy (Persia was conquered in CE 637). This hostility took the form of an 'ideological offensive' (i.e. the second system of thought, non-rational and foreign) that made use of the Persian religious–cultural heritage inspired by Zoroastrianism, Manicheism and Mazdaism and was designed to discredit the religion

of the Arabs and undermine the state they ruled. In response, the Abbasids encouraged the rationalist Muʿtazilite line of theology, which placed emphasis on the intellect, and, despite the opposition of the jurists, they officially adopted, as part of the ideology of the state, the Muʿtazilite doctrine that the Qurʾan was created (i.e. strengthening of the first system of knowledge, the 'Arabic-religious intelligible'). Jabiri argues that it is as a response to this political context and in order to strengthen Arab rationalism that the Caliph al-Maʿmūn (CE 813–33) commissioned the translation of Greek texts into Arabic (i.e. introducing the third system of knowledge, the 'intelligible intellect').[41]

The tension between the Arab and Persian cultures, Jabiri holds, gave rise to two intellectual currents, the gnostic or illuminationist current of the Persians that hides behind Shīʿite movements (e.g. Ismaʿilism and Ikhwān al-Ṣafā), and the rationalist current of the Muʿtazilites. The former joined forces with the literalist jurists, led by Ibn Ḥanbal, and staged some kind of an intellectual coup against the Muʿtazilites, leading the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (CE 847–61) to change the religious policy and show more favour towards the jurists. But the political philosopher Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (CE 870–950) took on the cause of rationalism the Muʿtazilites had initiated.

Jabiri holds that the intellectual problématique (*al-ishkāliyya al-fikriyya*) that Arab Intellectuals are facing in relation to the *turāth* is an extension of the problématique that Fārābī faced in his time, when he tried to bring together religion and philosophy.[42] In Fārābī's time, Greek philosophy was making its impact on the Islamic milieu, but was facing resistance from religious people. Thus in his *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* (Book of Letters), according to Jabiri, Fārābī sought to show the permeation of Greek culture and its transfer into other cultures, including the Islamic. In this way, Fārābī would read, at times, Greek culture through Islamic culture, and vice versa at other times. Jabiri believes that Fārābī purposely adopted an ambiguous writing style,[43] especially in his *Kitāb al-Milla* (Book of Religion), 'reflecting the fears of the social forces that Fārābī's philosophy expressed, [but also] its weakness to pursue the revolutionary impetuousness towards their aspirations'.[44] What Fārābī wanted to tell his co-religionists, Jabiri holds, was that philosophy and religion both share the same truth, the Muslim philosophers had realised that and therefore would not challenge religion. But the religious people did not realise this, and so they opposed the philosophers.[45] Fārābī thus developed an ideological allegorism (*taʾwīl ʿīdiyūlūjī*), enabling him to theorise about a dream project of the '"virtuous city", a city of reason, order, fraternity and justice, a dream with which he invested the various

sciences of his era, especially the rational sciences'. He had a 'combative rationalist discourse' that in Jabiri's view qualifies Fārābī as the medieval 'Rousseau of the Arabs'.[46]

The next big name who might have been expected to develop Fārābī's dream project is the philosopher Ibn Sīnā or Avicenna (CE 980–1037). Alas, Ibn Sīnā lived in the heartland of Persian culture and the influence of Fārābī's writings on him was not developed into a political project. Instead, he used Fārābī's thought to develop his gnostic intellectual development. Ibn Sīnā's so-called 'Eastern philosophy', then, proved to be 'a national Persian project'. The implication of this was far reaching. Islamic thought, which had reached its apogee with al-Fārābī following from the open rationalism of t he Muʿtazilites and al-Kindī, turned to 'an opressively lethal non-rationalism'. It was to be propagated by the influential theologian Ghazālī (CE 1058–1111), eventually leading to an impasse for rationalism in the Muslim East.[47]

It was only in the Muslim West, al-Maghrib (Jabiri's country) and al-Andalus, that Fārābī's rationalism was recovered, first by Ibn Bajja, then developed by Jabiri's hero, the philosopher Ibn Rushd or Averroes (CE 1126–98).[48] With Ibn Rushd, Jabiri observes a rupture with 'Eastern philosophy', exemplified in his severe critique of Ibn Sīnā's writings.[49] He re-introduced into Muslim thinking a rational and critical discourse which gave religion and philosophy each an independent identity but a common mission, that of the pursuit of truth.[50]

Ibn Rushd was inspired by Aristotle's principle of demonstrative knowledge, and in his commentary on Aristotle's works, Ibn Rushd, Jabiri opines, made his own unique intellectual mark on it:[51] 'there is really a specific and authentic Averroist philosophy in his commentaries on Aristotle, a philosophy that is worthy of that [Averroist] name, and Islamic truly worthy of this description'.[52] This leads Jabiri to argue that there is a specifically Maghrebian and Andalusian school of philosophy that was rationalist in its approach and which reached its apogee with Ibn Rushd.[53] Contemporary intellectual energy, he believes, should be spent to 'regain and reinvest the rationalist and the "liberal" gains' from the Islamic tradition in the same way Ibn Rushd did.[54] To do so, he envisages an 'Averroist' future, arguing that the 'survival of our philosophical tradition, i.e. what is likely to contribute to our time, can only be Averroist'.[55]

Jabiri certainly gets the major names and chronology of Islamic history right, but the same cannot be said about every aspect of his analysis of the events. We need to bear in mind here that Jabiri considers himself as the author of a 'cultural project'. He is explicit

that he is exploring the past to help him resolve the problems of the present. In his views, these problems are best remedied by Arab unity and the strengthening of Arab rationalism. In 'de-constructing' the texts – the method he chose for analysing the *turāth* – he ends up 'constructing' a history of a past that is conducive to the aspirations and needs he deems appropriate to the present. He therefore paints pictures of a past and a futuristic vision of the *turāth* featuring the rise and fall and future rise of Arab rationalism.

There are many factors omitted from Jabiri's historical survey: he disregards the Shīʿites' influence on the Muʿtazilites; his reading of the Muʿtazilites is selective – they were also the cause of an Inquisition (*miḥna*) instituted by the Caliph al-Maʾmūn, a period during which Muslims were coerced to acknowledge that the Qurʾan was created and not eternal, and were imprisoned if they refused, as in the case of Ibn Ḥanbal.[56] Jabiri further ignores that from a contemporary perspective, philosophy in Fārābī's 'virtuous city' assumes a quasi-dogmatic status in the state; and that Ibn Rushd's ideas have very little, if anything, to offer modern aspirations of democracy and liberalism. Neither Fārābī nor Ibn Rushd can be said to have been fans of democracy; they discussed it briefly, and they both classified it under what they thought of as 'ignorant regimes'.[57]

Ali Harb (who presents himself as someone working in the field of philosophy) is very discerning of this aspect in Jabiri's discourse and questions the value of Islamic philosophy if all it stands for is an ideological discourse:

> Is it (i.e. Islamic philosophy) [there] so that we may seek inspiration from it via a kind of intuition through which we read our desires and hopes and bring about our dreams and future projects? Otherwise how are we to explain Jabiri's call to consider Fārābī as the Rousseau of the Arabs except for the fact that we lack today a Rousseau-like [figure], and that we lack liberalism, rationalism and democracy . . . and by that (i.e. Fārābī's) virtuous city becomes a model for/image of 'the socialist, democratic and liberated city of the Arabs' which is the city that Jabiri dreams about, and perhaps we all dream about?[58]

Noting the weak theoretical and scholarly bases of Jabiri's discourse, Abdou Filali-Ansary asks whether one 'has the right to reproach him when we know that the problem is essentially political'.[59] But even if we decide to drop scholarly criteria in assessing Jabiri's work, and judge it on the basis of political aspirations, his approach is not even

inclusive. It does not cater for contemporary challenges facing all Arabs (Muslims and non-Muslims) of the Arab world, let alone those Muslims living outside the borders of the Arab world. The Shīʿites who make up a sizeable proportion of the Arab population would not find a dignified place in Jabiri's account of the *turāth* nor in his hoped-for age of Arab rationalism.

Examining Jabiri's analysis of the tradition in light of his own critique of existing discourses, one cannot help but ask what exempts his discourse from being 'Orientalist', if Orientalism, as he understands it, is a strictly ideological discourse. In other words, what makes his characterisation of Arab intellectual awareness as one of irrationality (*allāʿaqlāniyya*) different from the 'Semitic mind' which the Orientalists theorised about?[60]

Analysis

It is indeed true that Arab reformers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Afghani and ʿAbduh, were entrapped by the tradition. They intended to pursue a modernist/reformist agenda. But they opted for the promotion of a renewal of the *turāth* as a political response to the rapidly modernising Europe that had an expansionist agenda into the territories of the Ottoman Empire from the late nineteenth century onward. In their minds, modernising came to mean being like, and at the same time submitting to, Europe. Those such as Taha Hussein (1889–1973), who thought that following the European model of industrialisation, education and political reform was an essential step towards modernisation, were not heeded.

Is it useful to explain the problématique of the tradition, as Jabiri does, by speaking of an epistemic structure specific to the Arabic intellect? Is it even helpful to analyse it by drawing a divide in the Arabic intellect, a gnostic and irrational Muslim East and a rational Muslim West, in the hope that this rationalism, which reached its apogee in the work of Ibn Rushd, will somehow come to the rescue of the whole of the Arab world? Such a discourse, based on a selective reading of the *turāth*, offers nothing more than imaginary solutions. Ultimately, it replaces one dogma with another.

Yet, why do so many of these Intellectuals remain entrapped in this emphasis on the past in their forward-looking aspirations? Are the reasons political or intellectual, or both? One might say that there are two layers to this issue. The problem is political in so far as the political, with all its socio-economic malaise, is what dominates the intellectual sphere; it is intellectual in so far as the Intellectuals are

political agents in (intellectual) denial. There is then a political problem that is generating an intellectual one, and the latter, in turn, is perpetuating the former, and at the same time generating another political problem of an intellectual order. What the Intellectuals do not seem to be conscious of, or at least do not take into account, is the epistemic effect that their politically oriented project might have on their interpretation of the tradition. This is an important consideration because they themselves make the same (legitimate) criticism of the Islamist discourse, by pointing out that the latter subordinate the epistemic dimension of the religious tradition to their ideological agenda. The Intellectuals are oblivious to the fact that the same principle applies, even if one's interpretation of the *turāth* is intended for what they deem as a noble or politically correct cause.

Ali Harb offers an insightful explanation to this entrapment with the *turāth*, an explanation based on political reasons rather than 'civilisational' differences. He notes that Arabic intellectual discourse has seen a shift from one that is founded on universal knowledge and intellect to one that is driven by ideology and struggle. This transformation has prevented it from experiencing intellectual change and innovation.[61] Harb remarks that the obsession over the need for political struggle in the Arab world has had a severe impact on intellectual innovation because, as he sees it, the central concern of a combatant is not to engage in analyses but in self-defence. Karl Marx, in Harb's view, was misleading when he famously said that philosophers were preoccupied with explaining and understanding the world and that it is now upon us to change it, for Marx himself did not change the world as a fighter but as a philosopher.[62]

It seems that Arab Intellectuals are yet again entrapped. On the one hand, their interpretations of the *turāth* can be seen as a response to those advanced by the Islamists, which are rapidly gaining momentum. In this sense and to use Adonis's categories of the Constant and the Changing, they no doubt regard themselves as part of the current of Change. The way they are going about it, however, is not headed towards achieving a perpetual order of the Changing; instead, they are seeking to institutionalise the Changing in a Constant-like manner. On the other hand, it is natural for them to be conditioned by intellectual developments in the West. But while the Arab world is still struggling with coming to terms with modernity, modernity itself is more or less passé in the West, at least for some Western 'post-modern' thinkers. Arab Intellectuals, then, are in many respects taking part in a post-colonial discourse that appeals to them because it allows them to be flexible *vis-à-vis* their interpretation of the *turāth*. That is, they

can draw on criticism by Western post-modernists about the marginalisation of indigenous cultures in the history of the imperial West, which they regard as the cause of their malaise. The fundamental weakness of this discourse is that it is in serious denial of the fact that the Arabic-Islamic *turāth* is itself of imperial heritage! Their discourse claims to be critical but in effect it is adding yet another layer to the existing epistemological obfuscation that they are seeking to remedy. If it is to be critical and credible, then, to paraphrase the words of the Iranian scholar Daryush Shayegan, a sharp blade of a fundamental, merciless scrutiny should be brought to bear on even the most exclusive truths, be they religious or philosophical.[63]

Conclusion

The fact that these Intellectuals' discourse serves to break the monopoly of the Islamists' discourse over what constitutes the Islamic tradition is a constructive contribution to political debates. But it would be misleading to suggest that they are actually critical in their approach to and interpretation of the *turāth*. Moreover, the suggestion that re-awakening the philosophical current will lead to the emergence and implementation of democratic and liberal values, as they argue, does not actually follow from the content of the philosophic current of the tradition nor should it be expected to.

Yet, the philosophical component is awkwardly, sometimes forcibly, imported to the contemporary scene by many Intellectuals. What one finds in such a discourse is a yearning for an intellectual mood that permitted the growth of a 'rational theology' (Muʿtazilite *Kalām*) and later of an Arabic-Islamic philosophy. This mood, and not the actual substance of classical philosophy, is often confused and convoluted with liberal values that are meant to act as remedies for a modern political problem. In this respect, this discourse suffers from a lack of serious scholarly credibility. In the last two chapters of this book, I examine in more detail some of the philosophers' writings, particularly those of Fārābī and Ibn Rushd and show why their views are not commensurate with the promotion of liberalism. I show that notwithstanding the originality and impressive intellectual range these philosophers display in their writings, one can also point to dogmatic elements in their political philosophies, of a similar nature to those deriving from the religious current.

3 Are Islamic politics Islamic or Islamist?

> The [Islamist] program is *intellectual*, in principle, *epistemic* in substance, *political* in its purpose and significance. It does not stand outside of Islam, or [even] outside of secularism, from which many of its representatives disclaim any association with it. The time has come to discuss secularism and Islam together, with all the freedom necessary to produce a scientific epistemic thought capable both of comprehension and deliberation: deliberating the [classical] texts and history, the past and the present, the worldly and the sacred.
>
> Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd[1]

Following the events of 11 September 2001, in a speech to the Islamic Center of Washington, DC, the President of the United States, George W. Bush, said: '[t]hese acts of violence against innocents violate the fundamental tenets of the Islamic faith', and '[t]he face of terror is not the true faith of Islam. That's not what Islam is all about. Islam is peace.' Bush then read a rendition of a verse of the Qur'an: '[i]n the long run, evil in the extreme will be the end of those who do evil. For that they rejected the signs of Allah and held them up to ridicule.' In his remarks, Bush, who does not know Arabic, not only defined Islam in a way pleasing to the ears, but even managed to please Arabists, adding that '[t]he English translation is not as eloquent as the original Arabic'.[2] One would, accordingly be led to think that Islam stands for the same principles as those preached by the US, and that the concept of 'evil' that Bush often invokes in his rhetoric is consistent with that presented in the Qur'an, as the verse he read out testifies.

The terms 'Islam' and 'Islamic politics' have now entered the political vocabulary, and are used as if they are self-explanatory concepts. One encounters time and again terms and phrases such as 'true to the

Islamic teachings', 'authentic Islam', 'un-Islamic' and so on. When such terms are used in this way, it follows that their meanings are unambiguous, and one is consequently invited to infer or construct the existence and meaning of this 'Islamic' simply by contrasting it with one that is 'un-Islamic'. Are there consistent normative bases in the Islamic tradition that lend themselves to such essentialist categories at the exclusion of any other forms?

In Chapter 1, I discussed the Islamist current's understanding of the Islamic tradition. In this chapter, I address in more specific terms what is understood in Islamist discourse as Islamic politics and the way Islamic politics are directed to the realisation of an Islamic polity. I examine the work of Abu al-Aʿla al-Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb, representative of the core of Islamist political theology, and present a critique of their ideas against the background of other views from within the Islamic tradition. Abu al-Aʿla al-Mawdudi (1903–79), the founder of the Islamic movement in India then in Pakistan, and Sayyid Qutb (1903–66), from Egypt, have largely articulated the contemporary intellectual basis for the idea of an Islamic state governed according to Islamic ways and principles. Though Mawdudi stands outside what may be considered as an Arabic discourse, it is necessary to discuss his views, because of their significant influence on Qutb.

The questions driving this chapter are whether the Islamists' claim for authenticity in upholding Islamic teachings, as articulated by Mawdudi and Qutb, are exclusively true to the teachings of Scriptures. And how do they stand against the background of other visions from within the Islamic tradition? In attempting to answer these questions, I turn to the early period of Islam and draw on competing claims of Islamic authenticity. In doing so, I attempt to discern between the 'political' and the 'Islamic', showing how the 'political' has at times assumed the status of 'Islamic', while the 'Islamic' has, at other times, assumed the status of 'un-Islamic'.

Islamic politics

In his *The Process of Islamic Revolution*, Mawdudi outlines his manifesto for the realisation of an Islamic state (*dawla islāmiyya*). Such a state is to be based on a divinely ordained system of government, a Caliphate. It will thus have an intellectual Islamic foundation and, as such, be void of any divisive tendencies.[3] It is to be founded on a belief in God's sovereignty *(ḥākimiyyat Allah*). This *ḥākimiyya* is realised when Muslims totally accept that the earth and the management of its affairs belong to God alone, and He is solely responsible

for order, rule and legislation therein.[4] Such a Caliphate, Mawdudi argues, can only come about either by virtue of a person who is the Messenger of God or by way of a man, a Caliph, who follows the Prophet Muhammad in everything he brought forth in law and legislation based on God's revelation.[5]

An Islamic state is to be realised through an 'Islamic transformation' of the institutions of the society. Mawdudi explains that such a transformation entails the development of an intellectual movement that instils Islamic values among all members of society, by educating and ultimately graduating men in the various vocational and scholarly domains with an Islamic intellectual imprint.[6] The clearest and most reliable model available for this Islamic transformation is the Prophet Muhammad himself. Over a period of thirteen years (*sic*), he and his companions overcame numerous obstacles because they were dedicated to the path of God and the pursuit of truth, and thus, after the *hijra*, were able to establish an Islamic state in Madīna.[7] Muhammad lived and managed the affairs of Madīna for ten years, and during this period, Islamic thinking matured and moved from the realm of ideas and religious observance to the comprehensive organisation of a polity. This, Mawdudi believes, encompassed the development of various institutions of governance. They included models for the management of administrative, intellectual, judicial, economic, financial and social affairs, as well as models for managing foreign policies, devising appropriate plans for times of peace as well as war.[8]

There is of course a theological foundation for all this political application of religious doctrine. Mawdudi develops it out of Qurʾanic terminology in his *Four Basic Qurʾanic Terms*, linking four Qurʾanic terms, namely *ilāh* (God), *rabb* (Lord), *dīn* (religion) and *ʿibāda* (worship). An understanding of the meanings of these terms is, he believes, essential to the understanding of the Qurʾan's real essence, *tawḥīd*, belief in the One-ness of God.[9] God, he stresses, is God and Lord at the same time. This needs to be clearly understood lest one sets any creature alongside the One God and so falls into polytheism, *shirk*, the association of anything with God. Thus 'men should give their '*ibādah* to Him and Him alone; and one's *deen* should be exclusively for Him with no share of it for any other'.[10]

The political dimension of *ḥākimiyya* encountered above is linked to the theological notion of Divinity (*ulūhiyya*), for this 'categorically asserts that there is only One Being in the heavens and the earth Who possesses and exercises all the powers and all the authority'.[11] If *ḥākimiyya* characterises the nature of the constitution of the polity, *ʿibāda* characterises the manner and conduct of the citizenry. The

way in which it is understood lies in the root from which it derives *ʿabd*, a slave/servant, and it means to acknowledge 'someone other than oneself as holding supremacy or enjoying overlordship and of abdicating one's freedom and independence in his favour . . . and of surrendering oneself totally to his authority'.[12]

In 1954, a copy of Mawdudi's *Four Basic Qurʾanic Terms* made its way into the Egyptian prison where Sayyid Qutb was imprisoned.[13] He was deeply influenced by Mawdudi, and as his ideas developed, he became an authoritative source of influence to many Islamist movements.[14] The concept of *ʿubūdiyya* is as important in the political theology of Qutb as it was in that of Mawdudi. It is the foundation of the Islamic creed, it is held to make Islam unique among all the other faiths and it expresses the true meaning of the first sentence of the profession of the faith, 'there is no God but God'.[15] In line with Mawdudi, Qutb proceeds to advocate the establishment of an Islamic state, viewing Islam as a totality (*kull*) and to devise plans for the building of an Islamic society (*mujtamaʿ islāmī*).[16] Echoing Mawdudi, he draws on Muhammad's leadership as a model for the conduct of leadership in Islamic politics. Qutb's ideas, however, are more proactive than those of Mawdudi. He links the intellectual foundation of an Islamic state to political activism. In this sense, there are two connected components to Qutb's understanding of Islam: the first is related to the ethical foundations it provides for the community of believers as set out in the Qurʾan and manifested in the conduct and teachings of Muhammad; and the second is related to the socio-political duties that derive from this ethical foundation.

These components serve to explain the concept of 'Islamic' in Qutb's political vision, and both take shape in theory and practice as they respond to the 'un-Islamic' society (*tajammuʿ jāhilī*). The intellectual foundation that stands as a criterion for what is Islamic is belief in the divinity of God alone (*ulūhiyyat Allah waḥdah*), his lordship (*rubūbiyya*), guardianship (*qiwāma*), sovereignty (*ḥākimiyya*), dominion (*sulṭān*) and his revealed law (*sharīʿa*).[17] Progress towards this islamisation entails that those who testify that God is one and Muhammad is His Messenger renounce completely any prior commitment to the 'un-Islamic' society they come from, and devote their loyalty to the new organic and dynamic Islamic movement and its leadership that is to be brought into being.[18]

This new Islamic grouping is not meant to co-exist alongside non-Islamic groupings, according to Qutb. It should endeavour to organise itself in a manner that enables it to struggle against (*mukāfaḥa*), resist (*muqāwama*) and ultimately eliminate (*izāla*) any 'un-Islamic'

groupings.[19] Such, Qutb believes, was the way Muhammad went about his Islamic convocation/call (*daʿwa*), and the same should serve as a guide for a truly Islamic society to come into existence once again.[20]

Despite Qutb's use of Islamic vocabulary, there is a Platonist or neo-Platonist dimension to his discourse and vision. To borrow Anthony Johns' words, Islam, for Qutb:

> discovers a law of life for the whole of existence, and not simply human life . . . Behind this cosmic existence is a will that conceived it, a decree (*qadar*) that moves it, and an order (*nāmūs*) which governs existence as a whole.[21]

There is, then, a tripartite scheme that links the individual to his/her community and to the cosmos. The individual is subject to the same laws that govern the cosmos, and the laws of the sharīʿa that guide the individual and provide legislation for the community are but a part of the cosmic divine law that manages the cosmos.[22] 'There is good in realizing an absolute harmony between the life of the people and the cosmic law,' he writes. From this results another harmonious arrangement that ties people with their general activities whereby they all pursue one model that forms part of the general cosmic law.[23] This line is strong in Qutb's thought, and he conveys it not as a meta-physical reflection on reality but in a literal and real sense. Though this aspect of his thought provides an interesting theological foundation for his political platform, it weakens the case for his historicism. As noted in Chapter 1, Qutb believes that the Muslim community has for long experienced decline and deterioration in its religious observance. For his cosmological argument to be internally coherent, he would need to support it with a parallel account of the physical deterioration of the cosmos.

Some scholars have noted the influence of the medieval jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. CE 1328) on modern Islamist discourse.[24] Aspects of his political theology are taken up by Mawdudi and Qutb, and the religio-political concerns to which Ibn Taymiyya responded, to some extent, resonate with some of the contemporary challenges to the Islamic world to which the Islamists are attempting to respond. He was born in Syria in CE 1263, at a time when the Islamic world was both going through internal religious discord and threatened by external forces. The Mongols, nominal converts to Islam, had attacked Baghdad in CE 1258 bringing an end to the Abbasid Caliphate. In Egypt, the Mamluks, mercenaries of the Ayyubid dynasty, had revolted against

their rulers and assumed power in CE 1259, with Syria under their control. During Ibn Taymiyya's time, the Mamluks had to repel several attacks by the Mongols. An adherent of the Ḥanbalite *madhhab*, concerned to uphold Islamic teachings against the Mongols, Ibn Taymiyya was at the forefront of political activism.

He was perhaps the first Sunni jurist to justify, on religious grounds, Muslims fighting other Muslims if they did not act in accordance with Islamic teachings.[25] He also had a different approach to the traditional Sunni view of the loyalty owed to rulers. On one level, Ibn Taymiyya maintained the Sunni tenet that it is incumbent religiously for Muslims to have a ruler. In support of this, he cited among other hadiths: 'Sixty years of [putting up with an] unjust Imam are better than a single night without a ruler.' Like other leading Sunni theorist before him, he acknowledged that Muslims in a position of leadership were susceptible to becoming corrupt by power. Thus, he emphasised that it is the duty of a ruler to endeavour to rule according to religion.[26]

On another level, though, he stressed that a ruler could not simply command the loyalty of his people by virtue of his office. He had to earn this loyalty by ruling according to the sharīʿa. 'Assuming political authority (*imāra*) is a religious duty and a pious act (*qurba*) by which [a ruler] draws closer to God', it is the most excellent of all pious acts.[27] It is not personal interest that should drive the conduct of a ruler. Rather, he should struggle to achieve obedience to God and implementation of His Law. It is in this sense that it is enjoined upon any Muslim, especially the leader, to struggle (*jāhada*) in the cause of God,[28] until there is no opposition to the message of God and until 'religion be wholly God's'.[29]

Ibn Taymiyya also used *ʿubūdiyya* as a political concept to define the position of the citizenry *vis-à-vis* God. For him, *ʿibāda* encompasses everything in religion. In this, too, Ibn Taymiyya's emphasis is on the way the religious law shapes and governs the affairs of the state, perhaps indirectly circumventing the possible corruption of a ruler. Thus, *ʿubūdiyya* consists of 'not worshipping anyone other than God, but rather worshipping [God alone, in carrying out] that which He commanded and legislated'.[30] 'A created being's perfection is in his realisation of his *ʿubūdiyya* to God', and the more he grows in his realisation of *ʿubūdiyya*, the higher becomes his level of perfection.[31]

Can such a vision of Islamic politics be said to have a unique authenticity, and is it exclusively true to the teachings of Scriptures? How does it stand in comparison with other visions from within the Islamic tradition of how scriptural imperatives may be realised? To

address these questions, it is helpful to draw on some distinctions by George Hourani concerning assumptions generally made about the meaning of 'Islamic'. These pertain to his studies on the origins of Islamic theology and philosophy, but are nevertheless relevant in the context of this chapter. He rightly draws attention to the difficulties associated with qualifying as 'Islamic' anything that comes down to us through what he terms an 'Islamic filter'.[32] In other words, how does one approach an adjectival category such as 'Islamic' and what is to be made of it when it is used to describe such an encompassing domain as politics? Does it signify any identifiable criteria that provide the 'authentic' in the 'Islamic'? If not and if there is room for ambiguity in these criteria, on what basis does the claim to authenticity rest?

Hourani's point highlights two different issues for our enquiry. It serves as a reminder that ideas are rarely novel, that they can be borrowed, assimilated and appropriated, leading sometimes to the dissipation of their earlier origin(s).[33] It also underlines the relevance of investigating at first hand the source of a given claim, especially when the legitimacy and authenticity of that claim is based on a clearly defined and available source. When Islamists therefore advance the claim of upholding Islamic authenticity and act on the basis of this claim, the investigation of a category such as 'Islamic' becomes relevant.

The politics of Islamic politics

In *al-Islām wa Uṣūl al-Ḥukm* (Islam and the Principles of Political Authority), ʿAli ʿAbd al-Raziq argues that religion and society have no need for the Caliphate political structure (*khilāfa*), also referred to as Imamate – *imāma*.[34] Such a structure, he argued, has no basis in the principal authoritative sources of Islamic law relied upon in Islam, i.e. Qurʾan, Hadith, analogy (*qiyās*) and consensus (*ijmāʿ*).[35] Raziq goes so far as to argue that the horrific events that mark the history of the Caliphate, even during the reigns of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (i.e. Abū Bakr, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿUthmān Ibn ʿAffān and ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib) testify as to how extrinsic to the spirit of Islam the institution is:

> Were it not for fear that we may digress from the topic, we would have presented the reader the history of the Caliphate up to our time so that he may be aware of (*li-yarā*) the marks of coercion (*qahr*) and domination (*ghalaba*) in every episode of its sequence

> and so that he be mindful (*li-yatabayyana*) that that which is called a Throne does not get raised except over the heads of [ordinary] people (*bashar*) and does not rest except on the back of their necks. [So that he may also be mindful] that that which is called Crown does not have a life of its own except that which it takes from the life of [ordinary] people; that it has no power except that which it seizes from their power; and that it has no majesty and no honour except those which it snatches from their majesty and honour.[36]

Accordingly, he concludes, such a system is alien to the spirit of Islam. By denying that the Caliphate is intrinsically Islamic, Raziq is rejecting a system that assigns itself primacy and legitimacy over other systems by claiming to be in a special and unique sense Islamic.[37] Yet he speaks as if his position is based on an authentic Islamic spirit.

Raziq's book was published in 1925, just one year after Mustafa Kamal Ataturk abolished the Ottoman Caliphate, thereby putting an end to the institution in the Islamic world, an act that was virtually a direct cause for the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood. The book caused an intellectual and a political uproar, especially in view of the political circumstances that surrounded the timing of its publication.[38] Raziq, who was a religious scholar of al-Azhar University, was put on trial by a committee consisting of al-Azhar scholars, who unanimously decreed, among other things, that he be dismissed from al-Azhar and declared ineligible to hold any public office.[39]

But Raziq is certainly not the first Muslim (nor was he the last) to condemn a Caliphate system of government.[40] Historically, there has often existed a tension between matters to do with justice and what is meant to be 'Islamic' political rule. As early as the first century of Islam, ʿAbd Allah Ibn Masʿūd, a companion of Muhammad, articulates this tension succinctly: 'If the Imam is just, unto him is reward [in the after life] and unto you (i.e. people) [to show] gratitude. If he is unjust, sin is his burden, patience is yours.'[41] Obedience to the ruler came to be enshrined in authoritative Sunni sources, with successive influential figures exhorting a somewhat blind obedience to the rulers. The jurist Māwardī, for example, argues that 'the imamate is in place, as a substitute for prophecy in guarding the faith and worldly affairs',[42] because it is enjoined by religious law (*sharʿ*). Nevertheless, it did not escape him that the Imamate does not *ipso facto* amount to a just political system.[43] As Hanna Mikhail notes, the combination of theories of justice and *sharīʿa* has never been successful in Islam,

to the extent that 'important religious works of later medieval times could state that a ruler might follow the *sharīʿa* and still be unjust'.[44]

It is perhaps due to this tension that intellectual and political forms of dissent are part of the fabric of the Islamic tradition, of which the Islamists are but one of many heirs. Dissent goes back to the formative period of Islam itself when it became the religion of a community (*umma*). Not long after the death of Muhammad, Muslims began to question the conduct of Muslim leaders and the Caliph himself, notably ʿUthmān and ʿAlī. Some Kharijite groups even denied the need for an Islamic state, a political attitude some scholars have qualified as tantamount to a belief in anarchy.[45]

It is not insignificant how pious Muslims came to believe that it was possible to dispense with an Islamic state while at the same time maintain their profession and practice of the Islamic faith. The historical and hermeneutical context surrounding and leading to the rise of these groups is important for the understanding and appreciation of their political views. It also reflects the inevitable and mutual tension between Islamic principles and political practice.

The events that followed the murder of the third Caliph ʿUthmān (CE 656) had a politico-theological impact from which the Islamic community found it difficult to recover completely. ʿAlī, cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, whose supporters believed should have been the immediate successor of Muhammad principally on the grounds of kinship, was recognised as Caliph in CE 656.[46] ʿAlī's apparent reluctance to punish those responsible for insurgencies, and even ʿUthmān's murder, resulted in rebellion and insubordination by many among the community of Muslims. Most notable among them was Muʿāwiya, kinsman of ʿUthmān and, at the time, the governor of Syria. He was a son of Abū Ṣufyān, the leader of the Umayyad wing who, before accepting Islam, had led the Meccans against Muhammad.[47]

Muʿāwiya refused to pledge allegiance to ʿAlī. The differences between the two led to military confrontations that culminated in the battle of Ṣiffīn (CE 657). It was during this battle that ʿAlī succumbed to accepting Muʿāwiya's proposal for arbitration (*taḥkīm*). The details of this arbitration are complex and vary according to different accounts and sources. What is evident, though, is that the Qurʾan was used as a justification by both sides to further their respective causes. Those who were on the side of Muʿāwiya as well as those on the side of ʿAlī agreed that they would allow the Qurʾan to judge between them. Each side was to send a representative to argue its case, in accordance with the Qurʾan, with the other side's representative.

Some of ʿAlī's supporters, who later became the Kharijites, disagreed with him on who was to be their representative. ʿAlī wanted to send ʿAbd Allah Ibn ʿAbbās, whereas they wanted to send Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī. ʿAlī did not agree with their choice and at the end chose to send Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Ashtar instead. When al-Ashtar concluded negotiations, conceding to Muʿāwiya's side, the Kharijites, who wanted to persist with fighting instead, accused ʿAlī of favouring human judgement over God's.[48] They seceded from ʿAlī's camp and, not long after, they assassinated him. Their central doctrine, born out of this episode, was that God alone should be the judge in all matters (*lā ḥukma illā lillāh*).[49] ʿAlī, they believed, permitted human judgement to settle the conflict instead of following God's commandment in the Qurʾan. They cited a verse decreeing that if a party of believers deviates from God's way by oppressing other believers then one should fight that party until it returns to the straight path and submits to God (Q. 49: 9).[50]

This battle between Muʿāwiya and ʿAlī, fought by each side ostensibly in the name of best Islamic practice, was very much a contest for power. One may even argue that there was nothing uniquely Islamic in this contest. This is clear from the events leading up to it. There had been secret negotiations between Muʿāwiya and ʿAlī prior to the arbitration. Jarīr Ibn ʿAbd Allah al-Bajalī (ʿUthmān's governor of Ḥamadān who pledged allegiance to ʿAlī upon the latter's request),[51] the messenger entrusted to give ʿAlī a warning in a written message from Muʿāwiya to hand over the murderers of ʿUthmān, was also entrusted to convey a secret verbal compromise to ʿAlī.[52] In the written letter, Muʿāwiya resorts to a framework that would resonate with Islamic values in order to set out his demands and justify his refusal to pledge allegiance (*mubāyaʿa*) to him. He invokes the importance of the previous three Caliphs, the necessity to resort to '*shūra* among the Muslims', and notes ʿAlī's 'nobility in Islam and [his] close kinship with the Messenger of God'.[53] His secret verbal message, on the other hand, is no more than a pragmatic/political plan. Muʿāwiya tells Jarīr to convey to ʿAlī that he would be prepared to recognise him as Caliph on the condition that ʿAlī concedes Syria and Egypt and their revenues to him in Damascus and further agrees that Muʿāwiya would not be bound to pledge allegiance to ʿAlī's successor.[54]

This offer was never made public and ʿAlī in any case refused it. There is no point in speculating about the possible course of Islamic history had it been made public and if ʿAlī accepted it. Suffice to say that this episode, the impact of which had a central significance on

the course of Islamic theology and political history, is a clear instance of political and expedient motives being argued in 'Islamic' terms. What requires less speculation is that the new political regime that was born with Muʿāwiya, the first Umayyad Caliph, is marked by a change in the conduct of political rule in Islam.[55] With Muʿāwiya, there was less emphasis on following in the footsteps of the Caliphs, and a shift of emphasis on political power. Thus Muʿāwiya is reported to have said, 'I am the first of the Kings'; other reports have it that he said, 'I am the first of Kings and the last Caliph.'[56]

This is not to suggest that political power was absent prior to Muʿāwiya but, as Muhammad Jabiri notes, during the reigns of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, religion was regarded as the foundation of political activity, a perception that kept politics in a subordinate position to Islam.[57] Muʿāwiya's discourse, on the other hand, while not denouncing the *ancien régime*, signals new guidelines for the political approach he intends to pursue. He writes to his deputy Ziyād:

> We ought not govern (*nasūsu*) the people through a uniform policy (*siyāsa wāḥida*). [That is] we should neither [govern them through] a soft policy so that they would [be constantly] rejoicing, nor should [we govern them through] a harsh policy so that we would make them do [things that lead to] dangerous situations. Instead, you will be there to [apply] harshness, crudeness (*faẓāẓa*) and roughness (*ghilẓa*), and I shall be here to [apply] softness, harmony (*ulfa*) and mercy, so that when somebody fears something, he will find a door through which he could enter.[58]

The shrewdness of Muʿāwiya in politics, however, did not satisfy the concerns of all Muslims, some of whom continued to believe that only a leader of the family of the Prophet (i.e. from *ahl al-bayt*) could bring about universal justice. This feeling was particularly exacerbated during the reign of Muʿāwiya's successor, his son Yazīd (CE 680–3). Yazīd's reign was marked by rebellions, prominent among them those that were led by the grandson of the Prophet, Ḥusayn, who refused to pledge allegiance to him. This ended with the battle of Karbala, when Ḥusayn and his followers were killed by Yazīd's army. Political unrest continued during the Umayyad dynasty and eventually culminated in its overthrow in CE 750, when it was replaced by the line of Muhammad's paternal uncle ʿAbbās, hence the name Abbasids.

With the Abbasids, a version of Islamic authenticity was again invoked for political ends. They drew on the support of dissenting

voices coming from the side of the ʿAlīds, i.e. those who wanted the ruler to be a descendant from *ahl al-bayt* through the line of ʿAlī. The first Abbasid Caliph, Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ, however, was the great-great grandson of ʿAbbās, thus not of the line of ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib. Thus this righteous 'Islamic' claim to legitimacy had to undergo some amendments. Having denied the legitimacy of the Umayyads, accusing them of being usurpers of power, the Abbasids, in their turn, expanded their definition of *ahl al-bayt* by arguing that a descendant of ʿAlī had agreed to transfer the Imamate to a descendant of al-ʿAbbās.[59]

The application of what is considered as mainstream Islamic politics has therefore included properties other than 'Islamic'. From another standpoint, the Kharijites' political theology, considered to be outside mainstream Islam or 'un-Islamic', includes properties of the 'Islamic' genre. ʿAlī, it seems, even before they turned against him, feared their fanatic appropriation of the Qurʾan. Of some of them he said: '[when] they read the Qurʾan, they take it to be on their side, when it is [in fact] against them'; 'they appeal to the Qurʾan, even though they have nothing to do with it[s spirit], whoever fights them is worthier of God's [blessing] than they are'.[60]

Al-Shahrastānī defines a Kharijite as 'anyone who revolted against/disobeyed (*kharaja ʿalā*) the righteous leader agreed upon by the community [of Muslims]'.[61] The Muʿtazilite theologian al-Aṣamm may have been the leading anarchist theorist. His name is mentioned by heresiographers as well as authoritative writers on the subject of Imamate, like the jurist al-Māwardī.[62] The Kharijites' 'withdrawal/secession' that their name conveys highlights the anarchist disposition that some of them developed.[63] Such an anarchist disposition was also common among the early Muʿtazilite theologians (often characterised as the 'rationalists') but it was not common to all Kharijites.[64] For Muslims, the period during which Muhammad was the leader of the Islamic community in Madīna (CE 622–32) in addition to the period covering the rule of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs, i.e. up to CE 661, represents the ideal form of governance. The *khawārij* consider the period of ideal rule to include only the years of the first two,[65] that is up to the death of ʿUmar, after which serious divisions began to take place in the community.[66]

As Patricia Crone notes, the Islamic equivalent of Western anarchism's 'state of nature' premise is its opposite. The Western position is based on the assumption that an ideal age existed in the remote past during which society functioned without a state. The Islamic position, on the other hand, is based on the premise that there was

once a clearly defined historical period marked by a fusion of society and good/perfect governance.[67] Crone describes these Muslim anarchists as 'regretful anarchists',[68] in the sense that they were not anti-state *per se*. They came to believe, however, that the institution of the Imamate had turned into an institution of tyranny headed by kings/tyrants. By virtue of their religious posts and under the pretext of exercising a religious trust (*amāna*), they were able to get away with their malpractice. Since it seemed to the anarchists that this situation was bound to continue, it was best, they deduced, not to have an Imamate or appoint an Imam at all.[69] The most notable and explicit group among the anarchists to advocate such a view is the Najadāt. Their position is reported to be:

> People have no need at all for an Imam. [As a first recourse], they must cooperate with one another. Should they happen to decide that cooperation cannot be reached without an Imam to bring it about, they may appoint one.[70]

By grounding the Imamate in the sphere of social and human development, though the very basis of their claim is a religious one, the anarchists are not being entirely faithful to the words of Scripture. [71] According to the jurist Ibn Ḥanbal, a person who disobeys the leader is not to be counted as a Muslim. Basing his ruling on a hadith reported by Abū Hurayra, he says:

> Whoever disobeys an Imam from amongst the Muslim Imams – whose [nomination] for successorship (*khilāfa*) had been agreed upon and consented to [by Muslims] either by way of accepting [voluntarily his *khilāfa*] or by way of having been conquered [by him], then [the action of] this unruly (*khārij*) person [amounts to] renouncing his allegiance to [his fellow] Muslims, and to violating the traditions of the Messenger of God. When he dies, he shall die a *jāhiliyya* death.[72]

For it is incumbent upon Muslims to 'hear and obey (*al-samaʿ wa al-ṭāʿa*) the Imams and the leader of believers, the upright of them and the debauched'.[73]

The appropriation of ideas from the past can sometimes lead to unexpected twists. Ibn Taymiyya's ideas, as noted earlier, had an influence on Islamist political theology. Even though he was a Ḥanbalite jurist, by emphasising the commitment to obey God's law above anything else, including the obedience to a ruler for the sake

of having one, he somewhat departed from Ibn Ḥanbal's teachings. Instead, as Fritz Zimmermann remarks, when Ibn Taymiyya tried to extricate the Sunni community from its 'irksome commitment to the caliphate/imamate, he fell back on Kharijite tradition', it either did not 'occur to him or [he] could not bring himself to give credit to Aṣamm', the anarchist theorist.[74]

An equally bizarre twist is that the past 'seceders' from mainstream Islam share similarities with today's claimants to authentic Islam. Despite the Kharijites' 'Islamic' premise that God is the judge of all matters *(lā ḥukma illā lillāh)*, they have been considered as outside mainstream Islam, and for some, they are to be regarded as 'un-Islamic'. The Islamists, on the other hand, despite echoing the very same premise, i.e. the governorship of God (*ḥākimiyyat Allah)*, and despite their disobedience to rulers, are appropriating 'Islamic authenticity'. As in the case of the Kharijites, the Islamist case is nothing short of a challenge for the applicability and sustainability of Islamic political rule from an 'Islamic' point of view.

Scriptures and authority

If one were to take Hourani's discussions of what constitute 'Islamic' or an 'Islamic filter' to their logical conclusion, one would have to go back to the Qur'an. To do so from a scholarly perspective, in view of the link between Scripture and political authority in Islamist discourse, one would have to recognise the canonisation of Scripture as a relevant point of departure. This is a contested topic among scholars in the field, and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to address the primary sources that would do justice to it. In what follows, I rely on secondary sources that address this topic, attempting to use these debates for the purpose of highlighting weaknesses in the claims of various parties, in particular the Islamists, to possess 'authentic Islam'.

John Wansbrough's research on the canonisation of the Qur'an has been a subject of contention. In short, he argues that the Qur'an is the result of the work of more than one generation,[75] and it contains 'separate *logia* collections which had for some time prior to their final redaction been in liturgical and homiletic (of the sermon variety) use in one or several related communities'.[76] Leaving his methodology and argument aside, I shall borrow his theoretical view on how monotheist traditions developed their religious legitimacy. As Wansbrough observes, one may identify three bodies of data common to them, and upon which they base their legitimacy: (1) 'a historical

theophany' (i.e. a divine manifestation in history); (2) 'an existential task'; and (3) 'an agent as recipient for (1) and executor for (2)'.[77]

In the case of Islam, the historical theophany is God's revelation to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. This revelation, in turn, gives Muhammad, the Messenger or Agent of God, an existential task to carry out. All of this is documented in Scripture. The primary source of authority is the Qur'an, which functions as God's revelations, and the secondary source of authority is the Hadith, which comprises the collected sayings of Muhammad, documenting his encounter with his existential task. Wansbrough observes that in the works of Muslims as well as those of Orientalists, authority in Islam is often equated with Scripture,[78] and whenever such an equation is made, little is said regarding the canonisation of the text of the Qur'an, even though historically this was not entirely an unchallenged process.

For Muslims, the Qur'an is a pristine Book (*kitāb*), one in which 'there is no doubt' (*lā rayba fīhi*).[79] It is the Word of God, hence claims for its authenticity are seemingly unassailable.[80] They are based on the inimitability (*iʿjāz*) of its language, the immutability of its authority, and the eternal relevance of the message it carries. Contemporary scholars, however, note that early sources reveal that questions pertaining to the content of the Qur'an were on the minds of early Muslim scholars who were involved in the canonisation and codification process of Scripture.[81] Taking such early concerns into account in this discussion is not designed to advance arguments or claims to do with 'un-authenticity' of the Book. Instead, it is to explore a question posed earlier in this chapter: what happens to 'Islamic authenticity' if one finds that there is an ambiguity, of an equally 'authentic' status, in the criteria that are assigned to it? To put it differently, the purpose is to highlight the fragility of assumed links and formulae such as Scripture = Islamic = authority = authenticity.

One may highlight two points of relevance to this discussion: (a) the process by which the verbal revelations became the written text of the *muṣḥaf*, i.e. the Qur'an; and (b) the degree to which one can assert that the final recension of the Qur'an includes the totality of the fragments on which the verbal revelations were written by those who held them in their memories (*ḥuffāẓ*).[82] In relation to (a), the process of putting into writing the verbal revelations, Muhammad is said to have received from God – via the angel Gabriel over a period of twenty-two years – verbal revelations, which he recited to his companions. They, in turn, wrote them down or memorised them. Some were possibly not committed to writing until the death of Muhammad.[83] This aspect, as Thomas Michel notes, naturally raises

a question as to whether the memory of the *ḥuffāẓ* is inerrant. It follows that the authenticity of the fragments and their contents are dependent on the possible fallibility of human memory. This possible fallibility is similar to the one Muslims point to in relation to other Scriptures.[84] For Muslims generally hold that whereas the Qurʾan is revealed from God, the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures, in their current forms, are written by prophets or disciples. It follows that due to the human involvement in and so interference (i.e. imperfection and corruption) with them, the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures are not faithful to the word of God in the same way as the Qurʾan, the latter being directly revealed (*munzal*) from God.[85]

As for (b) the canonisation of the *muṣḥaf*, the text of the Qurʾan as it exists today is that compiled and codified during the reign of ʿUthmān, the third Caliph. But early sources suggest that the collection of ʿUthmān was disputed by some. An earlier collection had existed, based on the fragments assembled by Zayd Ibn Thābit following the command of Abū Bakr, the first Caliph.[86] On the death of Abū Bakr, Thābit's collection was passed on to his successor ʿUmar 'who then bequeathed them on his death to his daughter Hafsa', one of Muhammad's wives.[87] When ʿUthmān established his collection, it was some time before it was universally accepted. Among the reasons for this reluctance by the community of believers were questions raised concerning the fragments used in the collection and the extent to which these fragments were faithful to the Abū Bakr-ʿUmar collection. Other reasons for this reluctance may be attributed to the fact that ʿUthmān's reign was marked by corruption, nepotism and political discord,[88] a matter that may have played a part in some Muslims' minds.

There is a different order of complexity. While the Qurʾan is now regarded as the first source of authority followed by those Hadith reports that codify the Sunna, early sources are not as assertive. Slogans such as 'the Sunna is the judge of the Qurʾan' or 'the Qurʾan has greater need of the Sunna for its elucidation than the Sunna has of the Qurʾan' are a further indication of the complexities surrounding the canonisation of the text. They also indicate the extent to which the influence of Sunna reports (i.e. human reports) had in the early period of Islam.[89]

But there is yet another order of complexity in connection with the Sunna. The soundness (*ṣiḥḥat*) of the Hadith(s) has itself been opened to question. Not all Hadith reports are considered as 'sound' (*ṣaḥīḥ*). To qualify as such, they need to be traced directly to Muhammad via a chain of transmission known as *isnād*. It was not until the reign

of ʿUmar II (CE 717–20) that the process of *isnād* became an important criterion in adjudicating the 'sound' sayings of Muhammad as distinct from the 'unsound'. Consequently, not just the reports about Muhammad's sayings and deeds were included under 'sound' Hadith, but some of the opinions of Muhammad's companions were also 'raised to the level' of prophetic tradition.[90]

On this point, Joseph Schacht, whose work has raised some controversy among scholars, questions the reliability of *isnād*. He holds that 'the evidence of legal traditions carries us back to about the year 100 AH only',[91] not far enough in time for them to be directly founded on the sayings of Muhammad. He thus concludes that 'the traditions from the Prophet do not form, together with the Koran, the original basis of Muhammadan law, but an innovation began at a time when some of its foundations already existed'.[92] In short, even the establishment of the Hadith as a source of Law followed an indirect searching path involving shifting choices and emphases.

Such questions pertaining to the canonisation of the Qurʾan and the codification of the Sunna have been contested by various scholars from within and without the Islamic tradition, and it is unlikely that a conclusive answer can be reached on academic grounds alone. The purpose here is not to solve the difficulties or mystery surrounding these foundation texts. Rather, it is to review the particular kind of authority assigned to Scripture by the Islamists in light of such historical questions about it. The relevant points to which this probing is directed are well summed up by Thomas Michel:

> That this [contested] material was reported without embarrassment by earlier generations of Muslim scholars is an indication of the fact [that] for the first centuries of Islam, the authentic Qurʾan was that preserved in *human* memory rather than on the pages of a book.[93]

Analysis

In their study *Muslim Politics*, Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori observe that 'Muslim politics involves the competition and contest over both the interpretation of symbols and control of the institutions'.[94] They note that invoking symbols is a particularly important constituting element in politics that can be used 'as an instrument of persuasion as well as coercion'.[95] The relationship between doctrine and practice, they add, is problematic in that it carries an aura of fixity and universality of doctrines that, if implemented, should lead

to a particular desired outcome. Such a formula does not take into account the principle that 'Islamic principles must be constantly reinterpreted' over time and space to meet social circumstances, giving rise to various interpretations of a given doctrine, as has been the case over the centuries.[96]

This line of critique applies to Qutb's discourse about his 'islamisation enterprise'. For instance, while he uses Muhammad's convocation in Madīna as a clear model to follow for his ideals, he either fails to account for the fact that Muhammad did allow for compromises in the course of his Islamic convocation (*daʿwa*). In other words, it is not that the doctrine is fixed, but rather the flexibility of the doctrine is such that it is deployed in the service of what is conceived of as something fixed.

As an extension of the contest over symbols, the kind of authority exerted by religion is relevant. Like other religious traditions, Islam does not seek to legitimate its authority on the basis of reasoning or verifiable experiences. This is not to suggest that outwardly secular traditions do so.[97] In the case of religious traditions, however, the notion of authority is legitimated on assumed spiritual grounds of a higher order than worldly ones, but with implications that permeate the worldly setting. That is to say that the religious/theological ground is not limited to the spiritual sphere. Instead, it forms a body of explanatory knowledge, believed to originate from a divine source, and hence carries authoritative instructions in various worldly spheres.

Religious authority, as John Hunwick notes, is 'an assumed authority' by those who claim to have '*special access* to "divine" authority and to be acting as agents for it'.[98] The agents, in turn, can assume a considerable capacity to provide directives and guidance, and order people to act in various spheres of life according to the scriptures of their respective religious traditions or their interpretations of them.

The dynamics governing theological principles are not unequivocal. It can be argued that the *descending* pattern that the theological claims for itself, i.e. descending from a divine origin down to an existential setting, is but a façade for an *ascending* pattern. In other words, the theological finds its formulation based on earthly rather than heavenly considerations, is transmitted via earthly mediums and is expressed by mortals. Abdul Hamid el-Zein, for example, proposes to approach terms such as 'Islam', 'religion' or 'history' not as 'entities with meaning inherent in them, but rather as articulations of structural relations'.[99] The latter in this case provides the parameters within which the former can legitimate its authority and where

'[r]eligion becomes an arbitrary category which as a unified and bounded form has no necessary existence'.[100] This ascending pattern can be discerned in the early history of Islam when structural relations were developing an idea of 'Islam', and particularly in the process of canonisation of the Qurʾan.

Conclusion

Muhammad ʿAmara observes that the nature of political authority has always been, continues to be and will always remain, the most dangerous and contested issue in Islamic political thought.[101] Indeed, in the Islamic tradition, political rule has not been limited to a determined set of criteria nor for that matter have rulers conformed to a specific and unified code of conduct said to be Islamic. Moreover, different and differing theories about its application have been advanced over the centuries by various thinkers. It is therefore impossible to claim that a reified model of Islamic politics exists. Yet, despite the historical evidence that shows diverse positions on the subject of politics in Islam, the Islamists insist that what they are presenting is an 'authentic' vision of Islamic politics.

Islamic politics has assumed a level of 'orthodoxy' amounting to unquestionable truth. It carries the sense that there is an Islamic way of going about applying Islam to political affairs, and that this way is morally and politically superior to other forms of rule because it is a divinely designed system. This chapter has questioned the claimed authenticity and absence of ambiguity in such claims. It has shown that a closer scrutiny reveals that there is more to the term 'Islamic' than these properties claimed by the proponents of this idea. To paraphrase an argument that Ghazālī used in his attack against the philosophers, if the meaning and application of Islamic politics is axiomatic, why is it that not all Muslims agree on one definition?

4 Allegory and orthodoxies

> The Qur'an is but lines of writing between two covers. It does not speak, it is spoken through humans
>
> Imam ʿAlī[1]

Attention has already been drawn to the fact that the Islamist discourse seeks legitimacy and priority of claim to authority (*aḥaqqiyya*) by drawing on Scripture and by explaining it in a way that suits the political ends it desires. Beheld through the Islamists' lenses, the Qur'an presents itself as having the right to adjudicate the merit and even legitimacy of specific ideas and values. If approached, however, without a political agenda, the Qur'an itself provides those who address it with an escape from such a seeming total authority over all aspects of life. It describes its message as containing exoteric (*ẓāhir*) as well as esoteric (*bāṭin*) meanings, and even offers the device of *ta'wīl* as a means of exploring them. It indicates explicitly that its message contains verses '[the meaning of which] is clearly established, they are the mother of the Book. There are other verses that are ambiguous/problematic.'[2] Coupled with the subtleties of the Arabic language, this distinction has provided a modality for thinkers, be they jurists, theologians or philosophers, who wished to explore and defend ideas beyond those explicitly sanctioned by a literal reading of Scripture.

Following on from the previous chapter, the purpose of this chapter is to highlight the way in which factors other than those explicitly stated in Scripture may assume a scripture-like authority. It attempts to show how religious discourse, in Islam, is capable of moving *in* and *out* of the religious sphere, while at the same time claiming always to be within the parameters of what constitutes 'true' Islam. To do so, this chapter explores the interplay between the literal sense of the Qur'an and the various allegorical interpretations (*ta'wīl*) of

many of its verses as illustrated in the writings of a number of influential thinkers. It draws on examples from the use of *taʾwīl* by the Muʿtazilite theologians, the Ashʿarite theologian Ghazālī, the philosopher Ibn Rushd, the Islamist Sayyid Qutb, and the Intellectual/Apologist Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd.

This chapter argues that in the history of Islam *taʾwīl* has often been used as a device deployed to generate or support different and differing truths or 'orthodoxies'. It has served, when deemed inappropriate, to veil the restrictions that certain verses of the Qurʾan, if understood literally or without due consideration to context, might impose on their teachings. It has also served as a convenient intellectual tool that justifies differences between the various rival schools of thought and even the inconsistencies within a single school.

Language and allegory

'Allegory' broadly refers to two inter-linked and sometimes complementary literary procedures. One is the act of writing allegorically, that is, to write in such a way that the apparent meaning does not directly address or express the ideas that the author wishes to communicate. A classic work of this kind in the Arabic tradition is that by Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqdhān*.[3] The other is *allegoresis*, the act of interpreting a given text allegorically, a process of discovering and setting out the hidden message of an allegorical work.[4] *Allegoresis* need not be limited to works specifically written to be interpreted allegorically; it may include works intended to be understood literally. It may be done for a number of reasons, such as to enhance, add further dimensions to or even manipulate the meaning of a particular text to suit a particular agenda. In other words, works of *allegoresis* may be as much about constructing or inventing a new meaning derived from a given text as construing the meaning its author intended. To use Solomon Simonson's words in the context of interpretation in Hebrew thought and scriptures, what one reader may consider 'as an "interpretation," another will denounce as a "construction"; what one may regard as a "construction," another will disdain as a mere "interpretation".'[5]

With respect to Islamic religious discourse, the dynamics between the literal and interpretive layers are often at play, in particular in the course of interpreting Scriptures. This is especially so because the Qurʾan, given its unique authority, itself lays the foundation for such ambiguous and distinctive layers (Q. 3: 7). This results in far reaching implications for the linguistic as well as religio-political traditions derived from it.

Any discussion pertaining to Islamic thought, then, should emphasise the role of the Arabic language in this field, along with the role of the Qur'an in shaping its development. It is pertinent that, in commenting on the rich metaphors of the Arabic language, the philologist Ibn Qutayba, of non-Arab origin,[6] should express passionately his admiration of the Arabic language.[7] The Qur'an, he held, could not be translated to any other language 'because the non-Arab [languages] are not as rich in metaphor (*majāz*) as [that] of the Arabs'.[8] In a similar vein, the noted Arabic grammarian and literary historian Jirji Zaydan (1861–1914) stresses that 'the Qur'an has had an influence over the literatures of the Arabic language that no other religious text has in other languages.'[9]

Many scholars have written appreciatively of the Qur'an's literary style. Anthony H. Johns remarks that the Qur'an is a 'mosaic of diverse styles' which serve to create the impact the rhetoric of the book can have on its listeners.[10] The Book 'is open to infinity', Johns observes, this being most vividly expressed in 'Sūrat al-Raḥmān: Every day He is in a new activity (*kulla yawmin huwa fī sha'nin*, Q. 55: 29). Which then of your Lord's blessings can you deny! (Q. 55: 30)'.[11] For Muslim scholars, the miracle of the Qur'an lies in the text itself, its *i'jāz*, or the inimitability of its language.[12] This *i'jāz*, Richard Frank observes, has a significance equivalent, at least, to the reported miracles of Moses and the magic of Jesus.[13] Hence, the Arabic lexicon *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* cites an unnamed scholar who, writing in a poetic style, expresses in religious terms the importance of mastering the Arabic language:

> Our duty to learn languages
> Is like that of memorising prayers
> For no religion is understood
> Except by the study of languages[14]

The Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad in Arabic as being the articulate discourse of God (*kalām Allāh*).[15] The sublime authority of this claim meant that the followers of the religion had an obligation to learn the Arabic language to read and understand the Qur'an. It was the first Arabic book to be read and most of the intellectual disciplines in Arabic that appeared after the emergence of Islam, as Zaydan remarks, 'either sprang from the Qur'an or originated as ancillaries (*khidma*) to it.'[16] Hence, the statement (of Abū 'Amr Ibn al-'Alā') that 'the knowledge of the Arabic language is the religion itself' reflects the complex dynamics linking Islam, Arabic-Islamic thought and the Arabic language.[17]

At a basic level, *taʾwīl* simply means to explain what the literal meaning is. But, at another level, it is a device to probe the deeper meaning of texts, and to search for meanings that the literal sense of the words may conceal, and even contradict. Further, there are two broad functions of *taʾwīl*. One has to do with ideas and the way their meanings are expressed in words (*taʾwīl al-maʿnā*). The other has to do with the rules of grammar governing the relations between words (*al-taʾwīl al-naḥawī*). As far as its function to designate meaning (*taʾwīl al-maʿnā*), *taʾwīl* refers to a usage based on its root (*a.w.l.*), meaning a return to the first/origin; and another usage that defines it as a tool of interpretation, commentary and exposition. *Al-taʾwīl al-naḥawī*, however, mainly reserved to the practice of grammarians, emphasises the role of grammar over the meanings of words. That is, when some Qurʾanic verses did not conform to what they considered to be the rules that govern Arabic grammar, they subordinated *taʾwīl al-maʿnā* to serve *al-taʾwīl al-naḥawī*.[18]

Viewed from the broad parameters of *allegoresis* procedures, the Arabic language has many literary forms and devices that one can use to uncover allegorical meanings. These include *sharḥ* and *tafsīr* (exposition, commentary), and the analysis of rhetorical features such as *istiʿāra* (metaphor), *tashbīh* (simile), *ramz* (symbolism), *majāz* (figurative/metaphor), *ishāra* (intimation/allusion) and *balāgha* (eloquence). All of these devices and more can feed into *taʾwīl* when considered appropriate. They do not just serve to enrich the language but also feed nuances and subtleties of meanings into it.

Taʾwīl: an overview

Q. 3: 7 is a verse of critical importance for the understanding of *taʾwīl*. It both lays the foundation for the interpretative tradition and gives legitimacy to reading subtleties and nuances of meanings that go beyond the literal sense of the words:

> It is He who revealed to you the Book. There are verses of it [the meaning of which is] clearly established, they are the mother of the Book. There are other verses that are ambiguous/problematic. Those [individuals] in whose hearts is deviancy, they pursue what is problematic [in them], seeking mischief in their interpretations of them. None know their meanings (*taʾwīl*) other than God. Those deeply rooted in knowledge say, 'We believe in it! All [i.e. the clearly established in meaning and the problematic verses] are from our Lord'. Yet none are mindful [of this] other than those endowed with understanding.[19]

The meaning of this verse is challenging. It raises numerous questions that are difficult to answer and that lead on to an almost infinite number of other intriguing questions. Among them, which verses are the *muḥkamāt* and which are the *mutashābihāt*? Is it only God who knows the interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of the *mutashābihāt*? Or can those deeply rooted in knowledge (*al-rāsikhūn fī al-ʿilm*) work out the meanings behind the *mutashābihāt*? If it is possible for them to do so through *taʾwīl*, can they actually resolve the meanings in a final and decisive manner, and what if they differ in their interpretations? Are the *mutashābihāt* verses meant to have an uncontested meaning? If so, what was the divine wisdom in uttering them in the first place? Or are they intended to be infinitely *mutashābihāt* and contested? One commentator wanting to dismiss claims about the ambiguities in the Qurʾan raised the point that Q. 11: 1 suggests that all of the Qurʾan is revealed in explicit verses *muḥkamāt*, whereas Q. 39: 23 suggests that all of the Qurʾan is revealed in parabolical verses *mutashābihāt*.[20] Yet, the fact that there is a qualitative difference between them is a powerful illustration of the complexities and layers of meanings that lie within the Qurʾan.

These questions, and others, have often concerned many Muslim and non-Muslim scholars interested in the different dimensions of the Islamic tradition.[21] The numerous commentaries on the Qurʾan show that the Book, far from being regarded as a text with fixed meanings, is a source of open-ended interpretations and reflections. Ibn Qutayba thus puts it, 'if all of the Qurʾan were exoteric (*ẓāhir*) and unveiled, such that both the learned and the ignorant could equally comprehend [its message], [intellectual] challenge (*tafāḍul*) would be obsolete, toil would cease, and ideas would perish'. That the Qurʾan does not consist in its entirety of exoteric verses is pure common sense for Ibn Qutayba, for it is 'in response to necessity that ideas and stratagems are born (*taqaʿ al-fikra wa al-ḥīla*), and as a result of sufficiency (*kifāya*) that incapacity and complacency arise'. [22] The commentator Zamakhsharī has a similar view:

> Were the question put 'Why is not the Qurʾan in its entirety *muḥkam* (clearly established)? I would reply, 'Were the Qurʾan in its entirety *muḥkam*, people would be attracted to what is easy to grasp in it. They would not be concerned with what they need from it. [They would not be stimulated] to enquiry, reflection, study and the use of reason. Were they to do that, they would neglect the one and only path to the knowledge of God and the divine unity.[23]

Such a spirit is common among other scholars who resorted to *taʾwīl* to discover meanings in Scripture additional to those that may seem self-evident.

Some philologists and commentators looked upon *taʾwīl* as a craft possessed by those endowed with superior knowledge and as a tool that can decipher hidden meanings in Scripture. To that effect, Ibn Qutayba cites a saying by the Prophet Muhammad in reference to his close companion Ibn ʿAbbās (d. CE 687) asking his son-in-law ʿAlī to 'teach him *taʾwīl* and instruct him [in matters of] religion'.[24] When the Kharijites used the Qurʾan as their justification against ʿAlī's arbitration with Muʿāwiya's army, ʿAlī (reported by Ibn ʿAbbās) told his emissary to the Kharijites: 'Go to them, and debate with them, but do not argue with them with the Qurʾan, for it has many aspects; rather debate with them with the Sunna.'[25] ʿAlī is also reported to have cited a scholar saying that '"Every verse has 60,000 interpretations". And this indicates that in understanding the meanings of the Qurʾan there is ample scope, and a vast range.'[26]

The mention of Ibn ʿAbbās draws attention to another way of understanding the Qurʾan. In addition to being Muhammad's close companion, Ibn ʿAbbās is known for being well versed in the Qurʾan, having memorised the revelations as Muhammad received them. Ibn ʿAbbās' approach is taken up by an early Sufi, Sahl al-Tustarī (d. CE 896) who quotes him as saying in reference to the *mutashābihāt* verses:

> God sent down (*anzala*) the Qurʾan according to four 'lectiones' (*aḥruf*): 1. what is lawful (*ḥalāl*) and what is unlawful (*ḥarām*), of which nobody is excused by his ignorance (*jahāla*); 2. an explanation (*tafsīr*) set forth by the Arabs; 3. an explanation set forth by those possessed of knowledge (*ʿulamāʾ*); and 4. a metaphorical part (*mutashābih*) which only God knows, and whoever claims to have knowledge of it save God is a liar (*kādhib*).[27]

Al-Tustarī develops Ibn ʿAbbās' approach and takes it to another level:

> Each verse (*āya*) of the Qurʾan has four senses (*maʿānin*), a literal (*ẓāhir*) and a hidden sense (*bāṭin*), a limit (*ḥadd*) and a point of transcendency (*maṭlaʿ*). The literal sense is the recitation (*tilāwa*), the hidden sense the understanding (*fahm*, of the verse). The limit (defines what is declared) lawful (*ḥalāl*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*) by (the verse) and the point of transcendency is the command of the heart (*ishrāf al-qalb*) over the meaning intended (*murād*) by it as understood from (the vantage point) of God (*fiqhan min Allāh*).[28]

This distinctive mystical approach to *taʾwīl* is taken up and developed further in the Sufi tradition. Ibn ʿArabī (d. CE 1240) uses *taʾwīl* in his own way. He quotes with approval a hadith of the 'illiterate and truthful Prophet' that there is not 'a single revealed verse of the Qurʾan that does not have a literal (*ẓahr*) outer and inner (*baṭn*) [meanings], and for every letter (*ḥarf*) is a limit, and for every limit a point of transcendency (*maṭlaʿ*)', and the 'inner [meaning] is [discovered by] *taʾwīl*'. *Taʾwīl*, then, adds another dimension to the understanding of Scripture:

> it varies according to the moods of the listener, to his [different] moments and the levels of his mystical experiences, and his different degrees of [mystical] attainment. As he rises [in mystical learning] above his rank, a new door opens up to him, through which he gains a [new] insight into a refined solemn meaning.[29]

From such a perspective not only are the meanings of the Qurʾan open-ended, but *taʾwīl* itself is an open-ended journey.

The Sufi tradition is largely based on the believer's spiritual orientation as he or she is individually inspired by the Qurʾan, or, as the Sufis say, as God gives them to understand it. But it is also true that Sufi teachings have filtered through, one way or another, into the broad landscape of the Islamic tradition, be that in philosophy, theology or jurisprudence.

Taʾwīl and theology

The political divisions pertaining to the leadership of the Muslim community that arose after the death of Muhammad generated discussions and debates about who was to be regarded as a believer and who was not. [30] On one extreme, the Kharijites took the view that whoever commits a grave sin ceases to be a Muslim. This had serious political and theological implications, because a ruler had the responsibility of leading the community in prayer, and it was impossible to pray behind a non-Muslim. They thus tended to revolt against any established authority or ruler they deemed guilty of grave sin. Eventually, in CE 661, one of them assassinated the fourth Caliph, ʿAlī, paternal cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. The anarchy that resulted as a consequence of their views led to the emergence of another theological school whose views were consistent with stable government. They were the Murjiʾites who took the view that judgement as to who was or was not a believer, and so a member of the community, was to be deferred (*irjāʾ*) to God.[31]

This dispute led in part to the emergence of another group, the Muʿtazila. Their founder Wāṣil Ibn ʿAṭā (CE 699–749) had been a student of the ascetic Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. CE 728). Their origin had political roots: they were those who separated from ʿAlī and took a neutral position, refusing to fight either for him or against him. On the issue of who is to be deemed a member of the community, the Muʿtazilites adopted the view that there is an intermediate position (*al-manzila bayna al-manzilatayn*) that a sinner may fall under.

Taʾwīl served the theology of the Muʿtazilites in ways without which they could not have developed their doctrines. Their belief in the unity of God was so tightly defined that they denied the subsistence in God of the divine attributes as distinct qualities, fearing that this might appear as a contamination from the concept of hypostases in the Christian doctrine of the trinity. The same concern led them to assert the createdness of the Qurʾan, also fearing that an argument for its eternity might impart anthropomorphism on God in the form of associating an attribute to Him. Their belief in divine justice (*ʿadl*) led them to posit that God aims what is good for his creation, and has nothing to do with man's evil deeds. They thus held the doctrine of free will, stipulating that humans were responsible for their own actions.[32] The influence of their ideas grew with the ascent of the Abbasids to power. It reached its apogee during the reign of al-Maʾmūn (CE 813–33), when the doctrine of the creation of the Qurʾan was imposed through an Inquisition (*miḥna*), a Caliphal decree requiring the learned people to accede to the doctrine.

The Muʿtazilites made abundant use of *taʾwīl*. They stipulated that it is obligatory to apply it to the anthropomorphic verses, arguing that monotheism required this. They called it *tawḥīd*, the unity of God, and ranked it as the first doctrine of their teachings.[33] Their teachings, however, did not win the support of the majority of the Muslim community. They came to be regarded as those who deviated from the true teachings of the *salaf*, for modifying the teachings of the traditionalists, *ahl al-salaf* or *ahl al-Sunna*. Eventually, they lost their position of influence, largely because of the jurist Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. CE 855) who despite imprisonment maintained his belief in the uncreatedness of the Qurʾan and the integrity of its literal sense. In so doing, he was in effect leading the ʿulama in a struggle for power over whether the right to define religious doctrines lay with the Caliph or with the ʿulama.[34] The *miḥna* came to an end in CE 847 following the succession of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil, who declared that Sunna and *ijmāʿ* are the doctrines of the Abbasid Caliphate and invited Ibn Ḥanbal to his court.[35]

The Muʿtazilites and their use of *taʾwīl* had further set back when Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (d. around CE 935) abandoned their teachings and established another school of theology that came to be called after his name, Ashʿarism. This was perhaps as a result of a spiritual awakening; some say he had a recurring epiphany calling him to defend the teachings of the Sunna. Al-Ashʿarī refuted many of their teachings. He affirmed the reality of God's attributes by calling against anthropomorphism but without denying God his attributes (*bilā tashbīh walā taʿṭīl*), they were to be accepted without questioning or qualifications (*bilā kayf*).[36] He also affirmed that the Qurʾan, as the speech of God, was uncreated. In his *al-Ibāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyāna* (An Exposition of the Principles of the Religion), al-Ashʿarī disapproves of *taʾwīl*, regarding it as a device tainted by the Muʿtazilites, and the cause of their deviation from the true teachings of Islam:

> Those deviating from the Truth from among the Muʿtazilites sought arbitrarily (*ʿalā ārāʾihim*) to interpret the Qurʾan allegorically in such a way that God has not made lawful or clarified through proof. They did not transmit [their *taʾwīl* based on reports] from the Messenger of God or on those made by the righteous predecessors (*al-salaf al-mutaqaddimūn*).[37]

Instead of *taʾwīl*, al-Ashʿarī invoked the phrase *bilā kayf* so that the teachings of *ahl al-Sunna* would be safeguarded from subjection to the criteria of human reason. Accordingly Muslims were not to reject the attributes that the Qurʾan predicates of God, nor should they question the anthropomorphic verses, even those that stipulate that God has hands, eyes, sits on a throne and so on. They should accept the mysteries of the divine *bilā kayf*. *Taʾwīl*, however, is too important an exegetical tool for Ashʿarism to do without. And when Ghazālī launched his attack on the philosophers in defence of Ashʿarism, he constructed his own guidelines for the use of it.

Taʾwīl in the Ghazālī–Ibn Rushd debate

By the time Ghazālī came on the scene in the eleventh century, while the Ashʿarite school had grown in influence superseding that of the Muʿtazilites, *falsafa* (philosophy) had made its mark in the Islamic intellectual life. It was clear that its followers aspired to carve a place for it in the intellectual arena, independent of theology.[38] As early as the tenth century, the philosopher Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. CE 950) had criticised the approaches of the jurists and theologians, without

discriminating between the different schools of jurisprudence and theology, describing the theologians' *taʾwīl* as a form of falsification (*tazyīf*).[39] Tensions between philosophers and theologians grew, reaching a climax when the Ashʿarite theologian Ghazālī wrote *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) and *Fayṣal al-Tafriqa bayna al-Islām wa al-Zandaqa* (The Clear Criterion for Distinguishing between Islam and Godlessness), henceforth abbreviated as *TF* and *Fayṣal*, respectively.[40]

In the *TF*, Ghazālī attacks the philosophers and their misconceptions about the validity of their intellectual pursuits and defends the sharīʿa, presenting it as having a higher authority than any intellectual alternative devised by the human mind. In *Fayṣal*, he develops a number of juridical classifications on the basis of which he condemns the philosophers as infidels. The fame his books enjoyed posed a problem for philosophers. Almost a century later, and in response to Ghazālī, the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Rushd was to write *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence) and *Kitāb Faṣl al-Maqāl* (Decisive Treatise), henceforth abbreviated as *TT* and *Faṣl* respectively.[41] *Taʾwīl* was used by both, Ghazālī limiting its application in order to protect his version of 'orthodoxy', while Ibn Rushd stretched its application in order to be able to draw resources from outside the religious sphere but still claim to be operating *within* it.

Ghazālī saw the Muslim community divided, and sought to reunite Muslims through redressing (*istiṣlāḥ*) and directing them towards the righteous path. His concerns were with the intellectual divides in the Muslim community due to the philosophers' deviations from the teachings of Scripture. Even so, as for social life, he shared the socio-political views of many of the philosophers, accepting an élitist hierarchical division of society.[42] Accordingly, his positioning of the political sphere *vis-à-vis* Scripture is a way of demarcating the intellectual sphere, i.e. the esoteric of the *élites*, from the common popular sphere, i.e. the exoteric of the masses.

Ghazālī believed that the errors made by the philosophers (*falāsifa*), leading to heresy, derived from their exaggerated notions of the validity and status of the knowledge achieved by Greek philosophers. For example, they assumed that individuals such as Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato and Aristotle had excelled in the various sciences and had discovered what would otherwise have remained unknown. They further assumed that Greek philosophers had denied the truth of religions (*niḥal*) and the validity of religious laws (*sharāʾiʿ*), branding them as ploys (*ḥiyal*) and concoctions (*nawāmīs muʾallafa*).[43]

As a result of accepting these assumptions, the Muslim philosophers, in his view, deserted the religion of their ancestors, Islam. In effect, they turned from emulating truth (*taqlīd al-ḥaqq*) to emulating falsehood (*taqlīd al-bāṭil*).[44] Ghazālī, therefore, decided to write *TF* in order to show the incoherence of the teachings of the Greek philosophers,[45] how they became confused about their beliefs in God and his messengers, and how this confusion led them astray, and caused others, including the Muslim philosophers, to go astray.[46]

Ghazālī, then, regarded Greek philosophy, in the form espoused by the *falāsifa*, as a rival to Scripture, and *falsafa* (Arabic philosophy) as presenting a serious threat to *kalām* (theology). As George Hourani puts it, the philosophers claimed to speak of demonstrative truth as something achievable by the intellectual disciplines based on Greek sciences. This, on its own, did not threaten the *mutakallimūn* (theologians). But when the *falāsifa* spoke of demonstrative truth in relation to matters dealing with God and the world using Platonic and Aristotelian concepts at the expense of, or even as a substitute for, religious formulations, the religious camp felt that religion itself was threatened. The theologians therefore took it upon themselves to take a leading role in the defence of religion, which was after all their *raison d'être*.[47]

Ghazālī on *taʾwīl*

As noted earlier, despite the Qurʾan's emphasis on God's uniqueness and transcendence, it includes anthropomorphic references. A literal understanding of Scripture, therefore, poses serious theological problems, even with the phrase *bilā kayf* (without asking how) to fall back on. The need to apply *taʾwīl* is wittily summed up by the Ashʿarite theologian and Qurʾanic commentator Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. CE 1210).[48] The Qurʾan, he noted, presents God with many eyes and hands, one leg, one side and so forth, such that 'were a creature so described to be a slave, nobody would want to buy him'.[49]

Ghazālī's premise was that Islamic revelation is not contradictory to reason: 'Regarding that which reason judges to be impossible, then it is incumbent to translate allegorically what the revelation states about it. It is inconceivable that revelation contains a decisive text that is contradictory to reason.'[50] To set this matter in a broader theological perspective, the Qurʾan, for Muslims, being the discourse of God, linguistically is inimitable. This inimitability extends to other domains that the Qurʾan encompasses. In the context of human actions, for instance, the Ashʿarites hold that Scripture is the sole source of

ethics, and that the concepts 'good' and 'bad' are to be defined according to God's commands or prohibitions.[51] It is then virtually impossible to escape from the need for recourse to *taʾwīl* when the Qurʾan is the source that provides guidelines for human actions.

Ghazālī devises his own principles to govern the use of *taʾwīl* in order to prevent the abuse of Scripture by giving it unjustifiable meanings. He sets out five levels of interpretation by the use of *taʾwīl*, these levels corresponding to his analysis of the levels of existence (*wujūd*). They are:

(1) *al-wujūd al-dhātī* (essential existence), based on the obvious, that needs no recourse to sensation (*ḥiss*) and intellect (*al-ʿaql*) for it to be grasped, and for which no interpretation is required, e.g. the existence of animals and plants;[52]
(2) *al-wujūd al-ḥissī* (sensible existence), based solely on the faculty of vision as experienced by the person who is engaged in the act of seeing. This may be visually experienced both in dreams as well as in a state of wakefulness;[53]
(3) *al-wujūd al-khayālī* (imaginative existence), based on images of sensible objects which arise in one's imagination when the sensible objects are no longer present;[54]
(4) *al-wujūd al-ʿaqlī* (mental existence), based on the grasp of only the abstract meaning of a thing comprising a 'spirit' (*rūḥ*), a reality (*ḥaqīqa*) and a meaning (*maʿnā*);[55]
(5) *al-wujūd al-shabahī* (analogical existence), when something exists only as a property of something else, such as anger or pleasure.[56]

Taʾwīl, if its use is valid, should be at one or another of these levels, and should be applied at the highest level possible,[57] stressing that the masses should always follow the literal meaning of Scripture.[58]

Despite this sophisticated paradigm, Ghazālī is aware of the elasticity of *taʾwīl*, and that its application can validly be extended beyond his own guidelines. While contending that all currents agree on the division of the five levels of existence by which he governs the application of *taʾwīl*, he qualifies them. He concedes, for example, that it is possible that they may differ on the definition of what constitutes apodeictic proof. In other words, he moderates his paradigm to accommodate his co-religionists who differ with him on issues of apodeictic proof, so that they are not taxed with disbelief.[59] Thus, he included among the believers even Ibn Kīsān, who denied the necessity to have an Imamate. He does not extend this tolerance, however, to 'most of the philosophers' and the Muʿtazilite theologians.[60]

In effect, Ghazālī uses *taʾwīl* to limit the circle of believers by excluding those who might threaten his version of 'orthodoxy'. In his *Jawāhir al-Qurʾan* (Jewels of the Qurʾan), a book in which he emphasises the importance of understanding the inner meanings of the Qurʾan, he alludes to the philosophers as those who rejected the literal meanings of the exoteric verses. Since they did not observe the correct principles of the application of *taʾwīl* in interpreting the Qurʾan, they failed to gain the insight into the spiritual world that is open to the elect (*khawāṣṣ*). Their intelligence, he says, ruined them, and 'ignorance is closer to salvation than a curtailed discernment and imperfect intelligence'.[61]

Ibn Rushd on *taʾwīl*

Jean Michot notes that, in general, most philosophers did not doubt the credibility of the Prophet in the revelations he communicated, even when they encountered in Scripture what in their minds were absurdities, such as the resurrection of the body, if understood literally. Instead, they argued that the essence of the Qurʾanic message extends beyond the written word and is in agreement with the truth of philosophy. This being so, it would be wrong to reduce the meaning of revelation to its exoteric and literal sense, and such verses should accordingly be understood as symbols and images of philosophical truth.[62] For them, Michot holds, 'revelation meets reality by its esoteric (*bāṭin*) meaning', whereas to follow the exoteric meaning of Scripture only is to resile from taking a step beyond the corporal world, a step they consider as the first condition towards perfection.[63]

It was in response to Ghāzālī's attack on the philosophers that Ibn Rushd wrote *TT* and *Faṣl*. Of these texts, the more important for the discussion of *taʾwīl* is *Faṣl*. It was written in Andalusia during the period of the Almohades (based on the Arabic *al-muwaḥḥidūn*, those proclaiming divine unity). It was a religious movement founded by Mohammad ibn Tumart, a Muslim reformer of Berber origin. The Almohades had inherited from the kingdom of Almoravides, which they had conquered in CE 1146, a Malikite system of Islamic law which was strictly applied. So strict was its application by the Almoravides that Ashʿarite theology was banned, and even Ghazālī's works were burnt.[64]

The central concern of *Faṣl* is to prove that the Law (*sharʿ*) compels the study of philosophy and the sciences of logic.[65] Thus, in the opening paragraphs of *Faṣl*, Ibn Rushd asserts that if philosophy is defined as nothing more than speculation (*naẓar*) using intellectual

reasoning (*bi al-ʿaql*) about beings in so far as they are proofs of the Creator (*Ṣāniʿ*),[66] then, according to the Law (*sharʿ*), such a study is either obligatory or recommended.[67] To support this, he cites verses from the Qurʾan that urge speculation, e.g., 'Reflect (*iʿtabirū*), those of you with vision' (Q. 59: 2). Such verses, he argues, can only mean that God compels the use of rational reasoning (*al-qiyās al-ʿaqlī*).[68] Syllogistically, this is translated as follows: (a) the Law compels speculation, i.e. the use of intellectual reasoning, on existent beings (*al-mawjūdāt*), and reflection on (*iʿtibār*) them; (b) and since the latter consists of nothing other than inferring (*istinbāṭ*) the unknown from the known, *burhān* (demonstrative method used in philosophy) is the best way of achieving this form of knowledge; (c) it follows then that the Law compels the study of *burhān*.[69]

In seeking to ascertain a place for *burhān* in his argument, Ibn Rushd is thinking here of the Aristotelian divisions of knowledge, which Aristotle elaborated by the use of various forms of syllogisms. The most perfect syllogism is the one that proceeds from true premises and leads to true conclusions as set out in his *Posterior Analytics*.[70] Ibn Rushd's point of departure, then, is based on (and biased towards) philosophical premises. Further, the eight attestations of the term *burhān* in the Qurʾan refer to proofs deriving from God's revelations and not through human speculation.[71] In other words, in setting out to prove that the Law enjoins the study of *burhān*, Ibn Rushd, by omitting the Qurʾanic meaning of *burhān*, i.e. a proof given by God, as his middle term, does not offer a demonstrative syllogism, but a rhetorical one. That is, he cites the Qurʾan for the purpose of persuasion, an inferior cognitive end pertaining to rhetoric according to the forms of knowledge set out in Aristotle's *Organon*, and not for the purpose of truth as the cognitive end of *burhān* as understood by the philosophers.

In order to give further weight to his argument, Ibn Rushd resorts to *taʾwīl*. Scripture, he argues, requires the application of *taʾwīl* to anything that it contains that does not conform to demonstration.[72] Thus, he deploys it as a discourse that will further the case for philosophy and, naturally, the philosophers. Ibn Rushd's way of arguing that Scripture enjoins the study of philosophy not only defends philosophy but presents it as superior to the religious disciplines, on the grounds that only philosophy opens the way to the discovery of truth through demonstration. He further endeavours to ensure that the status of the philosophers is recognised well above that of other practitioners of intellectual disciplines, such as jurists and theologians. For while the study of demonstration (*qiyās burhānī*) is assigned to

the philosophers, Ibn Rushd argues, the study of doxic syllogism (*qiyās ẓannī*) is assigned to the jurists.[73] Further, since the Law (*sharʿ*) and philosophy are both about truth, he writes, and given that 'truth does not oppose truth,' then it follows that 'it (i.e. *sharʿ*) is in accordance with and testifies to it (i.e. philosophy)'.[74]

In order to adapt *taʾwīl* for the purposes of philosophy, he draws on the subtleties of the Arabic language. The meaning of *taʾwīl*, he writes, is:

> [the] extension of the significance of an expression from real to metaphorical significance, without forsaking therein the standard metaphorical practices of Arabic, such as calling a thing by the name of something resembling it or a cause or consequence or accompaniment of it, or other things such as are enumerated in accounts of the kinds of metaphorical speech.[75]

As noted earlier, the literary devices subsumed under what may be considered as a metaphor in Arabic are many. It is convenient, then, for Ibn Rushd to say that when the exoteric sense of Scripture does not accord with philosophy, it is only fitting that one should apply *taʾwīl* to Scripture.[76] In other words, the conclusions of philosophy need not depend on nor conform to the exoteric sense of Scripture.

In addition to serving as an argument in favour of the independence of philosophy, the malleability of *taʾwīl* gives Ibn Rushd added ammunition to defend the study of Greek philosophy, as well as the views of the Muslim philosophers against Ghazālī's charges of disbelief. With regard to Greek philosophy, he argues that one should pursue knowledge of demonstrative reasoning using all the available tools (*ālāt*). If such tools happen to have been developed before Islam, then one should use them to the advantage of Islam.[77] With regard to Ghazālī's taxing the Muslim philosophers with disbelief, Ibn Rushd points out that Ghazālī as well as other theologians and jurists themselves differ on the rules concerning the circumstances on which *taʾwīl* may be applied. The Ashʿarites and the Ḥanbalites, he notes, disagree with regard to the meaning of certain verses in the Qurʾan.[78] Ghazālī himself concedes, Ibn Rushd remarks, that there is no unanimity about the use of *taʾwīl* in so far as it is dependent on apodeictic proofs. It follows then, according to Ibn Rushd, that Ghazālī's charges of disbelief against Ibn Sīnā and Fārābī cannot be regarded as decisive.[79]

In short, the elasticity of *taʾwīl* has served both Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd to make different, even opposing, cases. But, by using it, both were able to claim that they were operating within the teachings of

Scripture, even when at times they crossed its literal boundaries. Hence, despite their apparent differences, Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd both believe that Scripture cannot but be in accordance with reason, and, when it appears not to be so, then one must seek other significances that for some valid reason Scripture does not convey exoterically. This is where they both accord *taʾwīl* a distinct status. Ghazālī is well aware that it is a flexible tool, open for use to the advantage of many, himself included. He attempts to control it, hoping not only to maximise his stake but also to minimise, if not neutralise what other camps can gain from it. Ibn Rushd elevates *taʾwīl* to a higher status, higher even than the *qiyās* of the jurists,[80] and no doubt the ally of *burhān*. Through *taʾwīl* Ghazālī might have limited his version of 'orthodoxy', but, as Ibn Rushd's defence also through *taʾwīl* shows, he was not able to limit Islam.

Sayyid Qutb on *taʾwīl*

In the same way that *taʾwīl* proved its elasticity to suit the different purposes of Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd, it is being used in contemporary debates to further different agendas and points of views. It is not surprising that Islamists should not look upon *taʾwīl* favourably, given that their strategy is to draw on select Qurʾanic verses or Hadith reports whose literal meanings serve their agenda. But do they, in fact, escape the use of *taʾwīl* or even its tacit use? In this section, I consider Sayyid Qutb's negative attitude towards *taʾwīl* through his interpretation of Q. 3: 7 in his *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾan*.

It is worth noting that before Qutb became engaged politically, he had a different attitude to *taʾwīl*. He saw it as an aesthetic tool to enrich one's spiritual learning. In that spirit, he wrote a journal article in 1939, which dealt, as its title suggests, with the aesthetic representation in the Qurʾan. He later developed it into a book under the same title, *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qurʾan*. Politics is only a marginal concern in this work. Its central theme is to highlight aspects of the Qurʾan that are meant to be understood through our representative faculty, as if they are paintings. It is a spiritual aspect that allows the reader to experience the hypnotic power of the Qurʾan's literary dimension. Such was its hypnotic power, he holds, that the Arabs who were contemporaneous with the gradual revelation of the Qurʾan were captivated by it, as if they were bewitched. This was the case for both believers and unbelievers: whereas the believers were bewitched by it and believed, the unbelievers were bewitched by it and fled away. The reaction of the second Caliph, ʿUmar Ibn

al-Khaṭṭāb, testifies to this: 'when I heard the Qurʾan, my heart was softened for it (*raqqa lahu qalbī*), I wept and Islam became part of me (*dakhalanī*)'.[81]

Qutb's 'exercise', as he calls it, is an aesthetic representation that has implicitly all the hallmarks of *taʾwīl*, that is, to understand the text in a way that extends beyond the literal word. Representation (*taṣwīr*), he holds, is the most outstanding feature of Qurʾanic style. It expresses intellectual concepts, psychological states, experienced events, sights beheld, and human programmes by means of imagined but palpable images.[82] Qutb does not use the term *taʾwīl* explicitly; he reserves it to describe the entire book in his dedication to his late mother on the first page. In it, he tells how she had sent him to school to memorise the Qurʾan and learn to recite it melodically so that he could chant (*tartīl*) it to her, then she directed him to more in-depth study of it:

> [This is] to you, mother. It is the fruit of your long [dedicated] guidance to your small child, [who is now a] young man. If the beauty of *tartīl* has passed him by, yet perhaps the beauty of its meaning (*taʾwīl*) has not escaped him.[83]

By the time Qutb began to write *Fī Zilāl al-Qurʾan*, politics came to be the defining purpose of his writings. *Taʾwīl* seems to have lost the 'beauty' with which it once preoccupied Qutb and assumes an attribute associated with the enemies of the faith. The spiritual aspects of the Qurʾan are now to be converted into vivid political dynamics, a source from which the Islamic call (*al-daʿwa*) is to draw its strength:

> The Qurʾan is the Book of this call to Islam (*al-daʿwa*). It is its spirit and its incentive (*bāʿith*); its support and its structure; its guardian and its shepherd; its explanation (*bayānuhā*) and its interpreter (*tarjamānuhā*); its constitution (*dustūr*) and its program (*minhāj*).[84]

The term *taʾwīl* of *Sūra* 3 (chapter 3), *āl ʿImrān*, is to be read in a political context. This is a Madinian *Sūra*, and Qutb sets the revelation of it in the context of the first Muslim community under the leadership of Muhammad. This, he deems, should serve not just as a background against which its meaning is to be understood, but also as a model for contemporary Muslim society to follow:

> We must live [as if we are] with this first community (*al-jamāʿa al-ūlā*) [of Muslims], and become assimilated into its genuine humanity, in its actual life and [as it confronts its] human problems. We [must] reflect on the leadership the Qurʾan gave to this community, a direct leadership, as much in its everyday concerns as in all its long term goals . . . we must then feel that we too are being addressed by the Qurʾan just as the first *jamāʿa* was addressed by it. And [feel] that our own humanity (*bashariyya*), as we perceive it, recognise it, and experience it in all its particularities, responds [to the call] of the Qurʾan, and profits from its leadership in the same way the first community did.[85]

By the time this *Sūra* was revealed, Qutb continues, the Muslim community was established in Madīna, and the battle of Badr had just been won. But not all the people of Madīna were true Muslims. Some took up Islam out of convenience, and there were also hypocrites, waiting to see how things turned out and ready to create sedition if they could gain by it. There were also Jews, who were well connected and established economically, and whose commercial activities had been set back by the victory of the Muslims at Badr.[86] The *Sūra* is also set against the background of disputes with Christians and their erroneous beliefs, especially regarding the status of Jesus, and it calls to the true monotheism brought by the Qurʾan.[87]

The verse Q. 3: 7 and the *Sūra* as a whole are in response to and address disputes with *ahl al-Kitāb* (the People of the Book, i.e. Christians and Jews). It is *ahl al-Kitāb* who use *taʾwīl*; they are those 'in whose hearts is deviancy, they pursue what is problematic in [these verses], seeking mischief in their interpretations of them'.[88] This verse, in Qutb's views, sets apart the true Muslims from the rest. 'For those in whose hearts aberration (*zaygh*), deviation (*inḥirāf*), and error (*ḍalāl*)' exist neglect the true and clear principles upon which the faith is founded. Instead, they use *taʾwīl* and follow 'the *mutashābih* whose evidence (*taṣdīq*) deviates from believing in the truthfulness of its source, and submitting that it is He (i.e. God) who knows the "Truth" in its entirety'.[89]

True Muslims, those deeply rooted in knowledge, do not concern themselves with *taʾwīl* – they say with confidence: 'we believe it! All [the clearly established in meaning and the problematic verses] are from our Lord.' What leads them to this, in Qutb's view, is the trust in the truthfulness of the message because it comes from God, and because they know that it is rational, that the intellect should not embark on that of which it has no knowledge because of its human

limitations. In a sense, their discourse is Socratic; they know that they don't know. By virtue of their acceptance of Islam, they are aware that human intelligence is limited, the sincerity of their instinctive inspiration (*ilhām mubāshar*) is joined to the truth and is given assurance that they are on the right path by it.[90]

The political situation of the contemporary Islamic world is what drives Qutb's discourse, and through the lenses of the political the different *taʾwīlāt*, political and mystical, allegorical and literal, unfold. Despite his condemnation of *taʾwīl*, Qutb's discourse has it all, even in *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾan*. It moves in and out of these different categories, including *taʾwīl*, and it is the political goal that lends his discourse internal coherence. Once his discourse is removed from this political context, however, and viewed against the background of the diverse Islamic tradition, it stands as one among a number of other discourses, all of which can claim 'Islamic' legitimacy, but none can be said to be the sole heir of authentic Islam.

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd on *taʾwīl*

If the Islamists should rhetorically condemn the use of *taʾwīl*, it is normal that the Apologists and Intellectuals should use it in order to advance their own interpretations of the traditional texts and the Islamic tradition as a whole. Taking Ibn Rushd and the Muʿtazilites in particular as their model, they are able to use *taʾwīl* to argue that rationalism is a legitimate heir of the Islamic tradition. One of the prominent contemporary thinkers who has used *taʾwīl* in this manner is Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd. He is one of many thinkers who suffered persecution for voicing his ideas. Members of the Muslim Brotherhood have accused him of apostasy. Using *al-ḥisba* law that allows a Muslim to bring a lawsuit against another Muslim if he/she is deemed as a threat to Islamic values, they sought a court order to divorce him from his wife (without consulting her). He left Egypt with his wife and is now based in Holland.[91]

He stands between the Apologists and the Intellectuals. He is an Apologist because his discourse is primarily grounded in the foundation texts. He is at the same time an Intellectual, because he approaches these texts as historical texts void of any sacred attributes, and applies non-traditional methodologies in reading the texts. Drawing on discussions of hermeneutics by Western scholars, Abu Zayd takes an open-ended approach to the interpretation of texts, including traditional Islamic ones. There is no such thing as an 'objective understanding' of the text nor is there an 'innocent reading' of

it, he believes, following Hans-Georg Gadamer and Louis Althusser respectively.[92]

For Abu Zayd, *taʾwīl* is inherent in the epistemological make-up of the Islamic tradition:

> The Qurʾan is a linguistic text that one may describe as representing a pivotal text (*naṣṣ miḥwarī*) in the Arabic culture. It would not be simplistic then if one were to describe Arabic-Islamic civilisation as the civilisation of the *naṣṣ*. . . . If this civilisation revolves around the *naṣṣ* itself . . . there is no doubt that *taʾwīl* – which is the other side of the *naṣṣ* – represents one of its important instruments in the production of knowledge.[93]

Given that it derives from the Qurʾan, it follows that the *turāth* is also a tradition of *taʾwīl*. In its essence, the call to Islam (*daʿwat al-Islām*), he argues, was intended to establish reason (*ʿaql*) in the intellectual sphere and justice in the social sphere. These two continued to be the basis of the early Islamic discourse, ensuring that revelation does not contradict reason.[94] Further, once they formed part of the reality of the society by virtue of being texts, the traditional texts, including the Qurʾan, became automatically subject to the historical and linguistic laws, including subjective interpretations, that govern any other text. They became:

> Subject to the dialectic of the constant (*al-thābit*) and the changing (*al-taghyīr*). For [while] texts are constant in the way they are uttered [in the same way] (*manṭūq*), they are lively (*mutaḥarrika*) and changing in the way they are understood (*fī al-mafhūm*).[95]

The reading of any of these texts, then, is subject to the linguistic norms that include concealing (*ikhfāʾ*) the meaning or uncovering it (*kashf*). This is particularly the case, and even more complicated, in relation to the Hadith. Whereas the Qurʾan has the character of the constant in the way it is uttered (*thabāt al-manṭūq*), the Hadith only acquired this characteristic through a process of reasoning, which is itself subject to an additional dialectical process of *ikhfāʾ* and *kashf*.[96]

In an article on the role of *taʾwīl* in contemporary Islamist discourse, he argues that 'the allegorical interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of religious texts – Qurʾan and Hadith, is considered as one of the more important tools of the religious discourse, if not its most important'.[97] He points out that religious discourse often overlooks and even purposely ignores

the historical context of the religious texts in question and the rules of grammar that should be applied to their understanding. This is because such a discourse seeks to discover in these texts a predetermined and ideologically biased meaning, thereby transforming revelation (*tanzīl*) into ideology.[98] This is so whether *taʾwīl* is in the form of reading the texts allegorically or literally against a context that can provide additional meanings to what the literal text suggests. Even when Islamists claim to be invoking the principle 'no reasoning [is needed] in relation to that which there is a Qurʾanic text [to explain it]' (*lā ijtihād fīmā fīhi naṣṣ*), they are in effect engaged in a form of reasoning and *taʾwīl* of a kind that relies on *ikhfā*'.[99]

On the whole, Abu Zayd's discourse is informative and has a unique approach to the traditional texts. His critique of the Islamist discourse is often sharp and well considered. The extent to which his discourse is shaped by his response to the Islamists, at times pushes his approach into unwarranted directions, especially in those writings he composed following his forced exile from Egypt. While he is correct in noting that the Islamists' *taʾwīl(āt)* is a very important tool that allows them to turn Scripture into an ideology, he also seems to suggest that there is a scientific way of reading religious texts or *al-taʾwīl al-ḥaqīqī*, that can lead to the true meaning of the texts (*dalālat al-nuṣūṣ*).[100]

Thus, his intention too has a political agenda, being a response to the Islamist discourse. Despite being discerning of the hermeneutical layers involved in reading the texts and of the difficulties in determining the meanings behind them,[101] he nevertheless speaks of 'true' *taʾwīl* as if there is an exclusive one. 'True' *taʾwīl*, for him, is tied to a political agenda; it is a necessary step, he says, towards breaking the monopoly of Islamist discourse over the texts, and giving a scientific understanding of them.[102] The flexibility of *taʾwīl*, however, is such that it is impossible to confine it to one specific and clear interpretation, whether this interpretation is deemed politically progressive or otherwise. If there is one generalisation that can be made about *taʾwīl*, it is that it works to the advantage of those who refuse to limit the flexibility of its application. A refusal to recognise this essential elasticity is bound to weaken the case of those who seek to impose on it arbitrary limits determined by their own agenda.

Conclusion

The Qurʾan then, far from presenting a single inflexible message, is a complex guide to life, and its guidance lends itself to different interpretations. *Taʾwīl* is a device that enables the reader to move between

its exoteric and esoteric significances. It has been used whenever certain aspects of the Qurʾan have proved incommensurable with the ideas of the philosophers and the mystics, and even with ideas the theologians and the jurists wished to justify or defend. Challenging the truth or the merit of Scripture is not a light option, for it would amount to a direct challenge to the word of God. Thus *taʾwīl* has served to veil, unveil and extend certain aspects of Scripture in accordance with the beliefs of various schools of thought, the Muʿtazilites, Ashʿarites, philosophers, Islamists, Apologists and Intellectuals. *Taʾwīl* has not come at the expense of the integrity of Scripture. At a certain level, it has imparted a certain mystique and depth to the scriptural message. At another level, it has served to resolve perceived inconsistencies and contradictions that the defenders of Scripture might otherwise have found indefensible or unacceptable. If there is only one significance to make in the light of emphases by various groups on 'authentic Islam', it would be to say that such a claim is but another mode of *taʾwīl*, adding yet another element to a long tradition of this diverse nomenclature.

5 Fārābī: on religion and philosophy

> The Sciences (of philosophy, astrology, and alchemy) occur in civilization. They are much cultivated in the cities. The harm they (can) do to religion is great.
>
> Ibn Khaldūn[1]

In Chapter 2, I noted that against the background of a dominant Islamist rhetoric, a number of Arab Intellectuals are developing a discourse that seeks to place weight on the philosophical tradition in Islam. They are critical of the central role medieval religious figures and their ideas enjoy in the understanding of the Islamic tradition at the expense of medieval philosophers. There is indeed a tendency in contemporary discourse, particularly Islamist discourse, to privilege the ideas and teachings of religious figures from the past above those of the philosophers. As Khalid al-ʿAbud puts it, Muslims today find themselves clinging faithfully to the works of religious figures like Shāfiʿī (d. CE 820), Ghazālī (d. CE 1111) and Ibn Taymiyya (d. CE 1328) at the expense of philosophical works by Ibn Rushd (d. CE 1198), Fārābī (d. CE 950) and other philosophers.

Unlike the religious sciences of jurisprudence and theology, medieval Arabic philosophy privileged the studies of Greek philosophical texts above Scripture. This openness to and acceptance of Greek philosophy is often associated with 'liberal' and 'rational' trends in the writings of Arab Intellectuals. The philosophers, it is true, generally emphasised the role of the intellect and scientific demonstration (*burhān*), but their approaches cannot be said to have translated into *open* and *liberal* intellectual trends in the way today's Intellectuals present them.

This chapter and the following one probe these so-called 'liberal' trends in the *turāth* attributed to the philosophers by exploring the political philosophies of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. CE 950) and Ibn Rushd

(d. CE 1198), through a critical reading of their relevant texts. In so doing, I shall show that some aspects of Arabic-Islamic philosophy, while not tied to Scripture, nevertheless exhibit dogmatic trends. My goal is not to make a judgement of Muslim philosophers through the lenses of and in accordance with values based on contemporary perspectives. Rather, it is to highlight the endemic problems in a selective appropriation of ideas from the past to address contemporary issues and problems.

In Chapter 2, in the writings of Intellectuals, we encountered Fārābī as the philosopher who developed the rationalist current the Muʿtazilites had initiated. Eventually, he achieved a harmonisation of Greek philosophy with the teachings of Islam. He presented this intellectual blend in his *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* (Virtuous/Excellent City), a work which qualifies him, in Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabiri's eyes, as the Jean-Jacques Rousseau of the Arabs. In this chapter, I review these assumptions and present a different analysis of the relationship between religion and philosophy in Fārābī's political philosophy.

Fārābī uses the term *milla* at times to imply religion in the broad sense as a system of beliefs, and also as a polity governed by the laws of a given religion. The dynamics between *milla* as a religious polity and philosophy (*falsafa*) are such that it is only through the imitation (*muḥākāt*) of philosophic teachings that a religion can achieve excellence (*milla fāḍila*). Within this scheme, the cognitive ends that Fārābī associates with the people of both entities (*ahl al-falsafa* and *ahl al-milla*) are qualitatively different. He was convinced, at least in theory, that a religious belief system is not necessary for the emergence of virtuous politics. Philosophy, on the other hand, is crucial for any form of virtuous politics, whether it is at a theoretical or practical level. I argue that in his scheme Fārābī does not provide the religious polity (*milla*) with an internally coherent political system that allows it to be unequivocally virtuous. Moreover, based on the tension between *milla* and *falsafa* I identify in his writings, and in addition to other textual references, I speculate whether Fārābī accords to the city (*madīna*) political attributes, which he does not extend to the *milla*.

Background

The relationship between religion and philosophy in Fārābī's political thought is a contested issue among scholars of Islamic philosophy. The following is a brief sketch of some views advanced with respect to this subject. Erwin I. J. Rosenthal holds that Fārābī

does not give reason 'supremacy over revelation'; instead 'philosophy shows the metaphysician the way to faith'.[2] Richard Walzer and to a lesser extent Fauzi Najjar believe that Fārābī's political philosophy reflects his Shīʿite leaning and is informed by the political aspect of the Sunni-Shīʿa schism.[3] ʿUthman Amin argues that Fārābī is a Muslim philosopher, combining two virtues, a loyalty to philosophy and faith in religion.[4] Miriam Galston believes that Fārābī 'perceived a significant although partial congruence between some Islamic virtues and the morality that facilitates the cultivation of reason.[5] Hans Daiber contends that 'philosophy and religion are depending on each other'.[6] Muhsin Mahdi argues that Fārābī was the first philosopher who 'sought to confront, to relate, and as far as possible to harmonize classical political philosophy with Islam'.[7]

It is useful to set what I take to represent Fārābī's political philosophy within the broader framework of intellectual currents in Islam during his time. These currents encompass *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *kalām* (theology)[8] and an emerging philosophy. Jurisprudence relies primarily on the foundation texts of Islam, Qurʾan and Hadith. When these do not provide resources sufficient for a decision on a point of law, one may resort to analogy (*qiyās*) drawn on the basis of the foundation texts or to the consensus (*ijmāʿ*) of the community.

The discipline of theology (*kalām*) is, at times, difficult to classify as well as to differentiate from philosophy. This is mainly because the theologians in general considered Islamic beliefs to be accessible to and in congruence with rational argumentation. They expressed this view by developing methodologies displaying the influence of Greek thought for argumentative purposes, which were not limited to the foundation texts. Richard Frank notes that for the theologians (*mutakallimūn*), *kalām* was understood and used in their literature as a 'speculative science'; they saw themselves as rational thinkers in the same way philosophers did. They did not, however, call themselves philosophers because the Arabic term for philosophy, *falsafa*, implied a received tradition, a 'neoplatonised Aristotelianism (including its core of physical, psychological, cosmological and metaphysical teachings)'.[9]

The *mutakallimūn*'s intention, then, was to devise a reason-based system of thought. They saw this as a way of fulfilling an obligation to know God,[10] and in this sense, the premises on which they based their formulations were not free of scriptural assumptions. In the outline of the central beliefs of the Muʿtazilites set out in Ashʿarī's *Maqālāt al-Islamiyyīn wa-Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn*, for example, it is clear that the Muʿtazilites are at pains to attempt to elaborate a theology

that is not in contradiction to the Qur'an. While apophatic elements are discernible in such statements as '[God] is neither a body, nor a ghost, nor a corporeity, nor an image',[11] it remains clear that the overall doctrinal emphasis is intended to be in harmony with Scripture. Binyamin Abrahamov notes that the use of reason as the only way of reaching the truth does not exist among Muslim theologians. And so when one refers to rationalist theologians, he explains, one is referring to those who claim that 'much, but not all, religious knowledge can be known through reason'.[12] Nonetheless, as Michel Allard and Georges Vajda note, it is the high level of sophistication that the theologians deployed in their methodologies that paved the way for the emergence of an Islamic philosophy that can be somewhat independent of Islamic teachings in its methods and ends.[13]

As for Arabic-Islamic philosophy, while philosophers generally engaged in reconciling their teachings with those of Islam, the foundation texts were not the primary and authoritative source upon which they based them. What is important to note with regard to Fārābī is that the intellectual environment in which he lived did not yet have a place for philosophy as a thriving independent discipline. It is therefore alongside the established disciplines of *fiqh* and *kalām* that Fārābī wanted to find a place for *falsafa*. In view of his attitude towards these two disciplines as of a mediocre intellectual status, it is safe to argue, as I do below, that he wanted a place for *falsafa* above that of *fiqh* and *kalām*.

Tension between philosophy and religion

Fārābī's understanding of philosophy echoes that of Aristotle, and finds that philosophy 'in itself and its essence, is the science of beings *qua* being'.[14] It is a universal science that entails mastery in a variety of fields.[15] Fārābī is not the only Arabic-Islamic thinker whose work and vocabulary (or jargon) reflects a strong neoplatonist and Aristotelian influence. Thinkers before and after him, such as al-Kindī and Ibn Rushd, among others, engaged in the study of philosophy, drawing extensively on Greek texts which led them, especially al-Kindī and his school, to introduce neologisms as technical terms in the Arabic language that correspond to Greek philosophical terms. Nevertheless, they made the effort to show that though their studies were not based on the foundation texts of Islam, they were working within the parameters of Islamic doctrine. Al-Kindī, for instance, makes use of Plotinus' book *Theology* (which was mistakenly attributed to Aristotle at that time) in order to convey a monotheist interpretation

of neoplatonic cosmic division, and ultimately coming up with 'a philosophic paradigm of the Muslim *tawḥīd*'.[16] Ibn Rushd devotes a book, *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, referred to in the previous chapter, in which he asserts that Scripture commands the study of philosophy.

Fārābī, on the other hand, not only exalts philosophy as an all-encompassing science but is explicit in making it strictly a Greek (Plato and Aristotle) phenomenon/blessing that owes nothing to any other source:

> These two sages are the creators (*mubdiʿān*) of philosophy, founders of its beginnings and its principles, perfecters (*mutammimān*) of its final ends and its branches. Dependent on them are its minor and major issues, and to them [pertains] the authority of its small and significant matters.[17]

As for religion, one would expect that if Fārābī were trying to reconcile the teachings of Islam with Greek thought, he would do so in writings dealing with religion or politics or a combination of both. What one finds instead is a theoretical exposition of religion with no explicit references to Islam. Indeed, as far as Fārābī is concerned, there can exist virtuous cities that do not share the same religion.[18]

The claim that Fārābī's political philosophy reflects his Shīʿite leaning is not well substantiated. Najjar and especially Walzer place too much weight on Fārābī's usage of the term *imām* in his writings instead of *khalīfa*, 'successor',[19] and they go on to associate *imām* with Plato's philosopher–ruler. In the context of Fārābī's political philosophy, the term *imām* does not have such a central role. For Fārābī, the components of political philosophy are of a static nature. The means, however, by which these components come to be implemented are variable and are subject to the broader dichotomy of virtuous (*fāḍil*) and 'ignorant' (*jāhilī*).

Moreover, a virtuous city requires that specific actions and modes of conduct be instilled among the individuals of that city. This may be done through a particular leadership, which itself comes about by virtue of a craft, and 'politics is the enactment of this craft'.[20] The craft he refers to is of a static and primary nature, whereas the form in which this craft is embodied (i.e. leadership) is of a variable nature and it can be 'virtuous' or 'ignorant'. Fārābī is also explicit about the range of terms one may apply to leadership, for he thinks that 'this craft is the kingly craft and kingship, or *whatever one may come to name it*'.[21] The term *imām* is, therefore, merely one of the terms that may be used to describe such a leadership and is not necessarily

impregnated with shīʿite connotations. Another difference between Fārābī's *imām* and Plato's philosopher–ruler is that Plato does not associate negative qualifications with his philosopher in the same way Fārābī associates *ḍalāl*, 'errant', with some of his *aʾimma* (e.g. *aʾimmat al-ḍalāl*, 'errant *imām*s').[22]

Fārābī uses the term *milla* at times to imply religion in the broad sense as a system of beliefs, and also as a polity governed by the laws of a given religion. It is with the latter sense that Fārābī begins his *Kitāb al-Milla* (Book on Religion):

> The *milla* is determined opinions and deeds, tied to conditions which have been drawn up for a group by their first leader, and through which he seeks to obtain a goal which he has in them or which is limited to them. The group may be a clan, a city or a region, and it may be a great nation, or it may be many nations.

For a polity to be virtuous, every member 'needs to know the ultimate principles of beings and their ranks, happiness, and the First leadership of the virtuous city and its ruling ranks'.[23] In addition, every member needs to know and perform the specific acts proper to him that bring about happiness.[24] After laying down these strict requirements, Fārābī explains that one can come to grasp these things either by conceiving (*yataṣawwaraha*) and intellecting them (*yaʿqilaha*) or by imagining them (*yatakhayyalaha*).[25] Very few people, he holds, are endowed with the capacity to conceive and to intellect, and most people resort to imagination. For these, 'one ought to have these things . . . produced for them *via* an imaginative impression (*tukhayyal*) by things which imitate them'.[26] It is this task of imitation that the system of beliefs of the *milla* encompasses:

> It is the outline (*rusūm*) of these things [i.e. the principles of beings, their ranks and happiness] or the outline of their images (*khayālāt*) in the soul. For the general public, when it became difficult for them to comprehend these things in themselves and as they really are *vis-à-vis* existence, it was necessary to teach them by different ways, and these are the ways of imitation (*muḥākāt*). And these things are imitated for every group and every nation by way of the things which are best known to that group. And it may happen that what is best known to each one of them may differ from what is best known to the other. Most people, who seek happiness, seek it by having had it made

imaginatively present (*mutakhayyala*) and not by having had it conceived (*mutaṣawwara*).[27]

But the differences in the modes of comprehension that Fārābī attributes to the people of *milla* and to those of *falsafa* are not so trivial that ultimately they are one and the same: 'Those who seek happiness and receive the principles of beings *conceived*, are the philosophers (*al-ḥukamāʾ*). And those for whom these things exist imagined in their souls, and they receive and seek them as such are the believers (*al-muʾminūn*).'[28] Further, in everything that philosophy produces by ways of intellection and conception, the *milla* produces by way of imagination, and in everything that philosophy demonstrates, the *milla* persuades.[29]

To put these differences in a clearer perspective, the modes of comprehension Fārābī is associating with the *milla* need to be understood in the context of his broader division of knowledge that follows that of Aristotle. Following a late Greek taxonomy, Fārābī appends Rhetoric and Poetics to Aristotle's *Organon* which comprises: *Categories* (*Kitāb al-Maqūlāt*), *Peri Hermeneias* (or: *De Interpretatione*, *Kitāb al-ʿIbāra*), *Prior Analytics* (*Kitāb al-Qiyās*), *Posterior Analytics* (*Kitāb al-Burhān* – Demonstration), *Topics* (*Kitāb al-Mawāḍiʿ al-Jadaliyya* – Dialectics), *Sophistical Refutations* (meaning *al-Ḥikma al-Mumawwaha*), *Rhetoric* (*Kitāb al-Khaṭāba*) and *Poetics* (*Kitāb al-Shiʿr*).[30] The fourth part, i.e. the book on Demonstration, 'is the most anterior in honour and leadership'.[31] In other words, it is the most important of them all, and it is the demonstrative faculty, Fārābī argues, which gives certainty to philosophy.[32]

Demonstration is unique among the other syllogistic crafts in that it 'proceeds from true premises through valid syllogisms to true conclusions'.[33] The other parts work only in a subordinate way to it. The first three are there as an introduction (*madkhal*) to it, the last four serve to provide it some sort of support (*irfād*), some being more useful than others.[34] The latter can also serve as a means to demarcate these different crafts in order to make known and differentiate between the different laws that govern each one of them.[35] Fārābī notes that a clear awareness of the differences between these crafts is crucial if one is to attain the correct desired goal one strives for. That is, one should not strive for the truth by using methods other than *demonstration*. Were such a mistake in methodology to occur, the outcome would be a deviation from the truth, resulting in what may be considered as strong opinions (*ẓunūn qawiyya*).[36]

As for rhetoric and poetics which have persuasion (*iqnāʿ*) and producing imaginative impressions (*takhyīl*) respectively as their cognitive ends, they are way down the list as far as their claims to truth. In *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, he writes:

> Rhetoric is the excellence to persuade the general public in the things that they practice in accordance with the knowledge that they have. [It does so] by means of introductions that, in the first instance, make strong impressions on them, using expressions (*alfāẓ*) that are, in the first instance, in agreement with the conditions that they are used to using. The craft of poetics produces an imaginative impression (*tukhayyilu*) by discoursing these things in themselves.[37]

In *Kitāb al-Khaṭāba*, he explains that rhetoric operates independent of and indifferent to truth–value. That is, just as it serves to persuade in philosophical matters, it can equally persuade in false matters. For although it is a syllogistic art and therefore crucial to persuading the general public to accept what has been verified, persuasion *per se* and not truth is its ultimate goal.[38]

As for poetics, in his *Kitāb al-Shiʿr*, Fārābī explains what he considers to be the similarities and differences between poetry and poetic discourse. The differences are not merely about a metrical discourse divided into parts that are uttered in an equal time period.[39] The subsistence (*qiwām*) of poetry and its essence (*jawhar*) is about two factors: it should be written to *imitate* something, and it should be divided into parts, which are uttered in an equal time period. The first aspect is more important than the second. A discourse is said to be poetic when its content *imitates* something, and it is poetry when, in addition to the imitation aspect, the discourse is metrical (*mawzūn*).[40]

An effective poetic discourse lies in the ability of its author to produce an imaginative impression of the imitated thing either in itself or into something else.[41] The complications arising from such a discourse, Fārābī contends, are that just as these impressions can represent imitations of things in themselves, they can also represent imitations of things already imitated. In other words they can be imitations of images removed by many degrees from reality and ultimately from the truth.[42] Unlike the imitative discourse of the people of the *milla*, the people of philosophy engage in demonstrative discourse, one that ranks highest in the syllogistic crafts and is most reliable of them all, for it leads to certainty (*yaqīn*).[43]

Implication on the political sphere

The differences between *falsafa* (Demonstration – *yaqīn*) and *milla* (Poetics–imitation) are paralleled by other tensions between the crafts associated with them, namely political science on one hand and *fiqh* and *kalām* on the other hand. In his chapter, 'Fī al-ʿIlm al-Madanī wa-ʿIlm al-Fiqh wa-ʿIlm al-Kalām' (On Political Science, Science of Jurisprudence and Science of Kalām), Fārābī presents what may be regarded as a manual of political science. Broadly speaking, according to Fārābī, politics is a craft through which virtuous leaderships and virtuous cities can come about. In more specific terms, this craft or the science of politics shows that virtuous cities and nations come about when individuals carry out the right modes of conduct, which are based on certain dispositions and moral characteristics. These various traits enable these individuals to attain real happiness, this being the ultimate goal of the realisation of a virtuous city. It further shows that such modes of conduct can only come about through a virtuous leadership, which instills the right and positive characteristics in the people. Importantly, politics differentiates between a virtuous (*fāḍila*) leadership and an 'ignorant' (*jāhiliyya*) one, so that the modes of conduct which get instilled in the people bring about the desired final end, that is real happiness.[44]

To understand the implications for the *milla* of what Fārābī takes as proper politics, his 'manual' needs to be analysed in the broader textual context of which it forms part. The text makes up one section of his book, *Iḥṣāʾal-ʿUlūm* (Enumeration of the Sciences).[45] The book is intended, as he sets out in its introduction, to enumerate the various sciences with their various divisions. It is also intended to serve not just as a comprehensive guide for those students intending to gain knowledge in any of these sciences but also that they may 'understand which science is better (*afḍal*), which is more useful, which is more perfect (*atqan*), more solid (*awthaq*) and stronger (*aqwā*), and which is more feeble (*awhan*), more untenable (*awhā*) and weaker (*aḍʿaf*)'.[46] In other words not all the sciences he enumerates can qualify as virtuous or excellent, noting here that, for Fārābī, the term science can apply to many disciplines but, for a science to qualify as excellent, it has to lead to certainty (*yaqīn*).[47] The sciences he enumerates are: Linguistics (*ʿIlm al-Lisān*), Logic (*ʿIlm al-Manṭiq*), Mathematics (*ʿIlm al-Taʿālīm*), Physics and Metaphysics (*al-ʿIlm al-Ṭabīʿī wa al-ʿIlm al-Ilāhī*), and Political Science, science of Jurisprudence and science of *Kalām* (*al-ʿIlm al-Madanī, Fiqh* and *Kalām*).

Whereas political science is tied to philosophy and comes to be political philosophy (*al-falsafa al-madaniyya*), *fiqh* and *kalām* are tied to the *milla* and their sciences are concerned with its defence. Fārābī's views of these two sciences are not flattering. He believes that they neglect to verify many important issues, assuming them to be true because they have been revealed from God and therefore must not be questioned:[48]

> Jurisprudence is the craft by which a man is able to derive the determination of one thing after another, things which the founder of sharīʿa, was not explicit in defining relative to the things which he was explicit about, precisely and determinately. [By jurisprudence], one is able to investigate the proper reason of the case according to the aim of the lawgiver for the religion, which he founded in the nation for which he legislated it.[49]

The craft of *kalām*, in its turn, does not go too far beyond that of jurisprudence in that the '*mutakallim* defends the things which the jurist uses as principles, without deriving anything else from them'.[50]

As noted earlier, while the *mutakallimūn* saw themselves as rational thinkers in defending Qurʾanic teachings, Fārābī saw it differently. In his book *On Intellect*, he remarks that the *mutakallimūn* confuse *ʿaql* (intellect), with *taʿaqqul* (prudence), pointing out:

> As for the intellect, which the *mutakallimūn* are always invoking when they say about something to be necessitated, rejected or accepted or not accepted by the intellect, they mean that which is generally accepted by the first impression of the people. For they name intellect that which is the first common impression by people or by most of them.[51]

For most people or the *jumhūr* they take *ʿāqil*, a term that means a wise/intelligent person and shares the same derivation of the term to understand (*ʿaqila*), to mean 'he who needs religion, and, for them, religion they believe to represent virtue'.[52]

What we seem to have, then, are two distinct systems giving rise to two entities: philosophy and political science (in a city, *madīna*?) on one hand, and *fiqh* and *kalām* (in a *milla*?), on the other hand. In *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, one observes that only *madīna* is mentioned in the section on *al-ʿilm al-madanī*. Only in the sections dealing with *kalām* and *fiqh* that Fārābī introduces *milla*, thereby removing it from the domain of political science, and associating it with *fiqh* and *kalām*.

Another difference to note is that Fārābī is keen to draw parallels between the functioning of the human body and his idea of a virtuous *madīna*, a metaphor that he does not extend to the virtuous *milla*.[53] In *The Philosophy of Plato*, the establishment of a *madīna* represents the apogee of political philosophy. In his search for justice the philosopher realises that:

> another city (*madīna*) ought to be founded . . . This will be a city that will not lack anything that leads its citizens to happiness . . . it is indispensable for its inhabitants that the princely craft in it be *true* philosophy [i.e. not imitation of philosophy].[54]

Analysis

Fritz Zimmermann has pointed out that there is a strong case to argue that the relationship between logic and grammar may provide for Fārābī a paradigm for the relationship between philosophy and religion.[55] This paradigm follows Fārābī's explanation that while the science of grammar supplies the laws that govern one particular language, the science of logic supplies the laws that govern all languages. Zimmermann's paradigm is convincing, especially when read in the context of Fārābī's *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* (Book of Letters), a book he devotes to the study of the development of languages and the way languages relate to philosophy and to the development of a polity.[56]

For Fārābī, the craft of logic occupies a prominent position, for it 'gives, *in summa*, the laws whose nature is to ascend to the intellect and to direct Man to the right path and to the Truth'.[57] The subjects encompassed by logic are the things for which logic supplies the laws/rules, and these consist of 'the intelligibles in so far as they are designated by the expressions, and the expressions in so far as they are a designation of the intelligibles'.[58] This definition suggests that there is a link between linguistic expressions and rational conclusions and the overall aim of the science of logic. This is not to say that logic and grammar are the same and, on this point, Fārābī is explicit in giving more weight to logic than to grammar. This also needs to be understood in the context of the various disagreements between the grammarians and the logicians in the days of Fārābī. The grammarians' views of logic, as voiced by Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī in his debate with Abū Bishr Mattā (who is said to have been Fārābī's teacher) was that logic is merely Greek grammar in disguise, and therefore they denied the science of logic its intellectual utility.[59]

Going by Zimmermann's paradigm, it follows from Fārābī's granting primacy to logic over grammar that philosophy has a primacy over the *milla*. Following on from this same paradigm, one may further argue that political science would have a primacy over *fiqh* and *kalām*.[60] As he enumerates the various sciences, Fārābī discerns two forms of politico-communal activities: the science of politics (*al-ʿilm al-madanī*), which one may interpret to fall under the umbrella of logic, given its strong alliance with philosophy; and the sciences of *fiqh* and *kalām*, which one may interpret to fall under the umbrella of grammar, given their limited application to the affairs of the *milla*. Fārābī then is not denying the legitimacy of *fiqh* and *kalām*. He is, however, making a distinction between, or rather indicating the preference of, the politics of philosophy over the 'politics' of the *milla*. The fact that *fiqh* and *kalām* figure under politics, and not the other way around, implies that politics is a crucial science and of a superior nature than the sciences normally associated with the study of Scripture. This latter point is more potent when Fārābī emphasises the universal nature of the science of politics, which he qualifies as virtuous. Virtuous politics, he writes, shares nothing with the other genres of 'ignorant'/errant politics.[61] The predecessors (*al-mutaqaddimūn*) had codified and learned from the various genres of 'ignorant' politics enough to work out the universal laws through which politics as a science (*ʿilm*) is genuinely implemented.[62]

Fārābī extends the distinction he makes between the politics of philosophy and the 'politics' of the *milla* to the polities that each is associated with. On a broad level, he designates three forms of social groupings (*ijtimāʿāt*) that vary in size but may be said to be complete (*kāmila*) in themselves: the biggest is one made up of many nations (*umam*) and extends to the entire world (*maʿmūra*); the middle is made up of one nation; and the smallest is the city, which is a social grouping that forms part of a nation.[63] The city, Fārābī believes, is the most perfect of all of the perfect social groupings.[64] While *madīna* is not always virtuous and thus not always linked to philosophy, *milla* is never tied directly to philosophy. At its best, that is, when it is virtuous, a *milla* is a 'simulacrum (*shabīha*) to philosophy'.[65] Further, whereas philosophers belong intellectually to virtuous cities and they should endeavour to move to such cities when they become available,[66] the same does not entirely apply to the *milla*, for it is a place for 'those who do not have the station to understand the philosophic discourse. This is either because of nature or because they are distracted from it.'[67]

Fārābī also indirectly displays an unfavourable and dismissive attitude towards what may be considered as religious practices. In a

chapter on piety (*khushūʿ*), for example, he criticises the bases upon which the notion of piety is legitimated and practised. Piety, he writes, is nothing but ploys (*ḥiyal*) and schemes (*makāyid*) devised by those who are unable to gain the goods (*khayrāt*) of this world through strife (*mughālaba*) or struggle (*mujāhada*). It is therefore preached or claimed that a god manages the world, and spiritual figures act as managers over all the various acts that take place. Under such a scheme, one is urged to abandon worldly goods, and instead apply oneself assiduously to the glorification and extolment of God. Those who devise such ploys do so through malicious premeditation and by scaring and repressing people, so that the latter may give up the goods of this world in order to gain better ones in the afterlife. Should they choose to enjoy the goods of this world, they risk punishment in the afterlife, so the spiritual figures claim.[68]

Fārābī, no doubt, was well aware that many of these traits he describes also apply to the description of piety one finds in the Islamic system of beliefs and to the manner in which this form of piety is exhorted in Islam and other religions. In contrast, Fārābī has a very high opinion of virtuous politics and its practitioner (*al-sāʾis*): 'Virtuous politics is that through which the practitioner attains a kind of virtue which he cannot attain otherwise, and it is the highest of what one can attain from [all] the virtues.'[69]

Fārābī's views of the *milla* as having an inferior status need to be understood as generalised statements that apply to other religious polities, and need not be limited to Islam. One may discern in his writings similar views with allusions to Christianity. In his book *Against John the Grammarian* (widely known as Philoponus), for example, Fārābī criticises Philoponus' refutation of Aristotle, with regard to the subject of the eternity of the world as being grounded on religious opinions. Such opinions, he writes, are 'far removed . . . from the nature of things'.[70] The point here is that Philoponus was a Christian and the religious opinions Fārābī is criticising would obviously extend to the religion of Philoponus.[71]

The source of Fārābī's *madīna* – speculation

It is unlikely that Fārābī had the Prophet Muhammad's *madīna* in mind. More likely his *madīna* stems largely from Aristotle's preferred social grouping. This interpretation, of course, depends on whether Fārābī had access to Aristotle's *Politics* or a summary of it. The view on this issue is not resolved, with Shlomo Pines arguing that Fārābī

may have had access to at least Book One and possibly Book Two of *Politics*,[72] and Rémi Brague arguing otherwise.[73]

Fārābī often invokes Aristotle's *Politics* as if to indicate that he had knowledge of its content. Assuming that Pines is correct, Fārābī shares with Aristotle the view that the city is the preferred social grouping. The city for Aristotle is the most complete form of social groupings or associations, which 'has reached the limit of every self-sufficiency, . . . was formed for the sake of living, but exists for the sake of living well'.[74] Further, if Fārābī does not extend the same political attributes to the *milla* that he does to *madīna*, then it is possible to trace this position back to Aristotle's views of those regimes, which derive their authority from divine laws.

In seeking to develop a theoretical basis for defining the best regime, Aristotle presents a critique of existing laws, including those that are said to derive their authority from a traditional, i.e., divine source. Robert Barlett suggests that in the discussion of the island of Crete, Aristotle is expressing a critical position towards 'divine laws', Crete being the prototype of a divine city. The lawgiver of Crete is Minos, the son of Zeus,[75] and despite their divine source, some of Crete's laws are defective. The Overseers and Elders in Crete who are elected from certain families,[76] Aristotle notes, have a virtual monopoly over the affairs of the state, while the citizens' role is merely to vote on whatever has been decided by the Overseers and Elders.[77] Taking Barlett's argument further, Aristotle notes that the system of Crete 'is not political',[78] and it cannot be said to be a government.[79] The point advanced here is that *Politics I* and *II*, if they were available to Fārābī, include a critique of divine law that may have influenced Fārābī's disposition towards the *milla*.

This is not to assert that Fārābī did not see himself as a Muslim or that his attitude towards religion warrants considering him as a heretic. Based on his writings, it is difficult to ascertain his commitment to the Islamic faith. Ian Netton cites Fārābī's *Duʿāʾ ʿAẓīm* (Magnificient Invocation) as a testimony to Fārābī's religiosity. This is the only text I am aware of in which Fārābī displays explicit spiritual commitment with references to the Qurʾan. It is not well established whether the text is Fārābī's. Muhsin Mahdi notes that it is not listed as part of traditional Fārābīan corpus but does not exclude the possibility that Fārābī is the author. It is possible that, like other thinkers, Fārābī thought that one adopts the religion one is born into and that's that.[80] But, in so far as the political organisation of a polity is concerned, one can discern that Fārābī conceived that religion is not a necessary component for the emergence of virtuous politics.

Philosophy, on the other hand, is prior to the *milla*,[81] and he deemed it to be crucial for any form of virtuous politics, be it theoretical or practical.

Another view of how to read Fārābī has been advanced by Dimitri Gutas. Gutas holds that one should not attribute a political philosophy dimension to Fārābī's writings. Basing his view on Ibn Khaldūn, Gutas suggests that Fārābī's writings are nothing but 'emanationist metaphysics'. 'The truth of the matter', he writes, 'is that there is no political philosophy as such in Arabic . . . before Ibn Khaldūn [1332–1406].' Arabic philosophy, he adds, did not comprise a field of study that 'investigates political agents, constituencies, and institutions' as a body of constituting elements in the functioning of societies.[82]

Fārābī is not an empiricist in today's understanding of what constitutes political science. But, as already noted, the thrust of his political philosophy is driven by a concern to develop theoretical norms in the sphere of communal affairs. In doing so, he engages extensively in discussions dealing with political agents from both ends (the ruler and those to be ruled/citizenry) and the normative values that should drive the functioning of societies.

This is not to deny, however, that there is a noetic dimension to Fārābī's thought or an emanationist metaphysics, as Ibn Khaldūn suggests. This is most evident in Fārābī's description of the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila*) as it relates to philosophy and prophecy. He identifies three tasks with the imaginative faculty: the task of retaining the outlines of the sensibles (*maḥsūsāt*), the task of connecting and disconnecting the sensibles, and the task of imitation. Based on its task of imitation, it is capable of imitating the sensibles and the intelligibles (*al-maʿqūlāt*).[83] By intelligibles is meant the essences of things that get detached from their matter (*mādda*) and become the forms (*ṣuwar*) of these matters.[84] In imitating the intelligibles, the imaginative faculty imitates the intelligibles in the rational faculty (*al-quwwa al-nāṭiqa*) even those which are most perfected, such as the First Cause and the things which are separate from matter.[85]

Further, the imaginative faculty figures in the interaction between the Active Intellect and the rational faculty. In philosophical jargon, the Active Intellect occupies a prominent place in the broader ranking of the principles of Beings. It is ranked third after the First Cause (associated with God or in Aristotelian terms the 'Prime Mover') and the Second Causes (associated with the Celestial Bodies and the Spiritual Beings). The Active Intellect is also the last of the principles of Beings which is separate from matter.

The Active Intellect is the cause by which the intelligibles and the intellect move from existing in *potentiality* (*bi al-quwwa*) to existing in *actuality* (*bi al-fiʿl*).[86] Further, the Actual Intellect typically makes up the rational faculty, and the imaginative faculty is the connective (*muwāṣila*) between the theoretical and the practical parts that make up the rational faculty. When the Active Intellect overflows on to the rational faculty, it is possible that the overflow (*fayḍ*) extends to the imaginative faculty through the Acquired Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-mustafād*) first, then the Passive Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-munfaʿil*), in which case the Active Intellect has a direct act in the imaginative faculty.[87] In this case, the imaginative faculty serves to process the intelligibles, which should arise in the theoretical part of the rational faculty, by imitating them with sensibles which it connects together. It also serves to process the sensibles, which should arise in the practical part of the rational faculty, either by imagining them as they are or by imitating them with other sensibles.[88]

The imaginative faculty is also associated with prophecy. For Fārābī, prophecy is a combination of the following elements: the imaginative faculty of a person, in a state of wakefulness, sees and receives from the Active Intellect both present and future particulars (*juʾiyyāt*) or their imitations from the sensibles, and the imitations of the intelligibles and the other noble existents. And if, in addition to this, it happens that this person also imitates the most perfected sensibles, then this person's imaginative faculty reaches the ultimate perfection it can attain, that of prophecy.[89] Once the imaginative faculty is perfected, the Passive Intellect comes to be perfected through intellecting the intelligibles, at which point the Acquired Intellect arises, the latter being further removed from matter and closer to the Active Intellect. A person is a philosopher when the overflow from God, *via* the Active Intellect, reaches his Passive Intellect, and he is a prophet when the overflow reaches his imaginative faculty.[90]

To return to the quotation from Ibn Khaldūn that Gutas cites, it is worth dwelling upon it in the context of Fārābī's position on religion and philosophy. In his *Muqaddima* and in discussing the need for political leadership, Ibn Khaldūn, referring indirectly to Fārābī, writes that:

> By 'government of the city' (*al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*), the philosophers mean simply *the disposition of soul and character* which each member of a social organization must have if, eventually, people are completely to have no need of rulers. They call the social organization that fulfills these requirements the

> 'virtuous city' (*al-madīna al-fāḍila*). The norms observed in this connection are called 'government of the city'. *They do not mean the kind of government that the members of a social organization are led to adopt through laws for the common interest. That is something different*. The 'virtuous city' of the philosophers is something whose realization (*wuqūʿ*) is rare and remote. They discuss it only as a hypothesis.[91]

One may note two points to Ibn Khaldūn's observation. The first has to do with the distinction Fārābī made between *madīna* and *milla*, as I noted earlier, and Ibn Khaldūn seems to suggest that the terms *madīna* and *siyāsa* have a particular meaning tied to philosophy. He is not, however, necessarily correct about philosophers seeking to 'dispense with rulers' especially considering the emphasis Fārābī places on virtuous leadership, not to mention the fact that many philosophers were closely connected to rulers. In fact, Fārābī enumerates a number of social groupings that stand in opposition to the virtuous city, and he regards the democratic city (*al-madīna al-jamāʿiyya*) as an ignorant city (*al-madīna al-jāhiliyya*).[92] The second point to note is that if the philosophers' 'ideal city' is a hypothesis, then Fārābī is not really in a dialogue with the Islamic *umma*. If he were, it should be assumed that the Islamic *umma* realised an 'ideal city' at least during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. But there is no reason why a hypothetical 'ideal city' cannot be a city *in potentia* for a political philosopher.

Fārābī's political philosophy and the contemporary scene

One need not just read contemporary works in critical theory in order to criticise many of the claims Fārābī makes about philosophy being viewed as a means of bringing about virtuous leadership and ultimately virtuous politics. In his *Risālat Dhamm Ladhdhāt al-Dunya* (On Rebuking Worldly Pleasures),[93] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī presents a neat critique of power derived from political status. He identifies three kinds of worldly pleasures (*ladhdhāt*), in which he ranks the sensible pleasures (*al-ladhdhāt al-ḥissiyya*) as the lowest, above them the imaginative pleasures (*al-ladhdhāt al-khayāliyya*) and the highest level the intellectual pleasures (*al-ladhdhāt al-ʿaqliyya*).

The middle one Rāzī identifies with those pleasures arising from superiority (*istiʿlāʾ*) and leadership (*riʾāsa*). He notes that there are two ways of approaching the abominations (*qabāʾiḥ*) of this kind of

pleasure. The first, he says, is to point out the numerous and great efforts one has to endure in the pursuit of leadership. The second is to prove that these efforts themselves are not of high honourable pursuits (*maṭālib sharīfa ʿāliya*), but are infamous and vain (*maṭālib khasīsa wāhiya*). The pursuit of leadership, he explains, is based on the fact that it is an expression of one having the capacity (*qudra*) to exercise his power over others. Rāzī's discussion as to why people strive to become leaders is more extensive than this, and is not in any way complimentary to aspirant leaders. In many respects, his critical treatment of leadership 'throws out of the window' the notion of virtue or excellence that Fārābī hopes for in or through the exercise of the craft of politics. Unlike Rāzī, Fārābī did not give much thought to the (im)possibility of combining power and knowledge and maintaining the integrity of both. Therefore, the concept of virtuous leadership – the central tenet of his political philosophy – is not solid enough to withstand the difficult (and un-virtuous) realities of political life.

In the light of his treatment of religion *vis-à-vis* philosophy, Fārābī's political philosophy is not a complete success. It is not so much that religion loses out, but more that philosophy does not seem to be capable of winning. Philosophers, he suggests, have vested interests in the success of the project of imitation (recall that imitation is associated with the *milla*). Fārābī seems to stress that it is very important for philosophers to give instructions correctly and in a way that their teachings to the general public make clear their imitative and analogical nature. If it happens, he says, that the people of the *milla* believe that they are following philosophy and not its analogies, then if real philosophy is transposed to them, it is likely that they will oppose it and oppose the philosophers (*ahl al-falsafa*). In such a case, neither philosophy nor the philosophers are able to exert any influence on the *milla*. Further, it is likely that the people of the *milla* inflict harm on philosophy and philosophers. For this reason, to ensure their own protection, the philosophers may be forced to resist the people of the *milla*.[94]

Accordingly, one may argue, philosophy is not without its limitations, not that Fārābī would admit it. For, as far as philosophy is complemented by the development of a polity,[95] and according to Fārābī most people do not have the capacity to conceive and to intellect, then philosophy is dependent on being accessible to being imitated just as much as the *milla*'s excellence depends on imitating philosophy. If this is a plausible line of argument, it may be worth wondering whether there needs to be a reverse process of imitation

and imagination on the part of philosophy and philosophers in order for them to be accommodated by the *milla*. Plato's *Republic* (Book VII) is perhaps an example: after the philosopher escapes the shadows and darkness of the cave and attains the light where he is in a position to see things as they really are, on his return to the cave he needs once again to get used to the shadows.

In some respects, I am coming to a similar conclusion to that of Daiber. Whereas Daiber follows a paradigm whereby he interprets Fārābī to be replacing logic with religion, I am following a paradigm (Zimmermann's) in which Fārābī is replacing grammar with religion. Thus, Daiber argues that the interrelations between *falsafa* and *milla* are central to Fārābī's political philosophy judging him as 'a very original thinker'.[96] I am arguing that this dependency emerges not by design but as a result of a shortcoming in Fārābī's political theory.

Conclusion

Fārābī's contribution to Islamic philosophy and his role as a bridge between Greek and Arabic thoughts are not contested. But it is quite unfair to appropriate his political philosophy to address the concerns of contemporary Arab societies, and make him the 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau of the Arabs' as Jabiri does. How can one plausibly compare Rousseau's eighteenth-century (just before the French Revolution) *Social Contract* in which citizens are equal and born free with Fārābī's tenth-century 'citizens' of the virtuous city who exercise their 'citizenship' by accepting their ranks in the city as assigned to them by the ruler? Another further blow for contemporary concerns is that Fārābī was no fan of democracy. He probably conceived of democracy only through the works and views of Plato and Aristotle, and so he regarded it as an 'imperfect regime'![97]

6 On Ibn Rushd's liberalism

> Ideas have wings, no one can stop them
>
> Ibn Rushd *via* Yusuf Chahine

If the presentation of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī in the discourse of Arab Intellectuals is selective and awkwardly imported to the contemporary Arab intellectual scene, the same equally holds true of Ibn Rushd (Averroes), if not more so. In contemporary Arabic political discourse, there are some Intellectuals who consider him as epitomising the liberal current of the Islamic tradition: a man of religion, an eminent jurist and at the same time a philosopher and a prominent commentator on Greek philosophy. They further argue that for the *turāth* to have a contemporary relevance, an 'Averroist spirit' needs to be reintroduced in the intellectual make-up of Arabic thought and culture; and for Arab-Islamic societies to experience progress, they argue that the future of the Islamic tradition has to be 'Averroist'.

That Ibn Rushd should be honoured for his contribution to the intellectual achievements of his own age is no doubt highly appropriate. The Intellectuals, however, have a rather different approach to Ibn Rushd's achievements. They use him to celebrate what they consider as the glorious past of Arabic-Islamic rationalism and, more importantly, as a source from which to draw 'liberal' and 'rational' values to address contemporary problems. The following questions, then, may fairly be put. Are they reading more into Ibn Rushd than what he actually stood for or even intended? And are they not, in effect, transfiguring his work into a manual for an 'orthodoxy' of a philosophical, as opposed to an Islamist, genre?

In light of the claims made for him, this chapter explores the extent to which Ibn Rushd may, in fact, be used as a model to develop a desirable contemporary 'liberalism'. It examines those writings of his

pertaining to religion and philosophy, the status of women in society and his views on the rules and justification for war. It argues that any attempt at understanding Ibn Rushd and his so-called 'liberalism' must rest on a contextualisation of his work and a careful investigation of the ways, if any, his ideas are congruent with contemporary understandings of liberalism.

Romanticisation of Ibn Rushd?

> The voice of Ibn Rushd can only be a voice of tolerance, even if he did not use the term 'tolerance' himself. This is because it is the voice of wisdom, philosophy and intellect. For philosophy cannot be but a space for tolerance, *ijtihād* (reasoning), and *ikhtilāf* (disagreement) . . . We find this tolerant spirit present in the experience of Arabic-Islamic philosophy starting from al-Kindī continuing to Ibn Rushd who was keen [to emphasise] the pedagogy of tolerance in his writings. He stresses the necessity of respecting the views and ideas of others 'who preceded us' (referring to the Greeks) 'whether this other did or did not share in our religion' . . . This contains an invitation for tolerance through respecting the culture of the other, and an implicit acceptance of the differences of cultures, their varieties, and the necessity of coexistence and dialogue amongst them.[1]

This quotation comes near the end of Ibrahim Aʿrab's book *Al-Islām al-Siyāsī wa al-Ḥadātha* (Political Islam and Modernity), almost as a cry for help, pleading that Ibn Rushd be summoned back from the twelfth century to restore tolerance in contemporary Arabic political discourse. Aʿrab is joined by many other Arab Intellectuals (and others) who wish to draw on and import Ibn Rushd's ideas as a means of addressing what they deem as contemporary challenges pertaining to the understanding of the *turāth*. Jabiri goes further than Aʿrab:

> Our era accepts the Averroist spirit (*al-rūḥ al-rushdiyya*) because it is in agreement with his spirit in more than one way, in rationalism, realism, axiomatic method (*al-naẓra al-aksyūmiyya*), and critical approach (*al-taʿāmul al-naqdī*).[2]

But this call to bring back Ibn Rushd from the past, to restore tolerance and rationalism in the present, itself includes in its discourse an unwarranted and unreasonable intolerance. For Jabiri, 'adopting the Averroist spirit means a rupture with the "Eastern" gnostic and

tyrannical Avicennian [i.e. Ibn Sīnā] spirit'.[3] He thus turns Ibn Rushd into a divisive figure with which he attacks 'oriental philosophy' (*al-falsafa al-mashriqiyya*) represented by Ibn Sīnā. The 'Averroist spirit', in his mind, is to cleanse the Arabic intellect from the Avicennian gnostic spirit and ultimately replace this harmful teaching.[4] It seems that Jabiri himself did not adhere to the Averroist rational spirit he himself prescribed. When the scholar George Tarabishi wrote a critique of his study of the Islamic tradition, Jabiri was incensed. He accused Tarabishi of being a Christian sectarian and, in Tarabishi's words, as being 'even more under-developed/immature than the Christian Arabs who were part of the Arabic epoch of *nahḍa* (renaissance)'[5] in the nineteenth century.

There is an aesthetic appeal in the use of the name Ibn Rushd as a symbol of 'liberalism' and 'rationalism'. For the Intellectuals, it is evident that he represents a source of pride, and a proof of the intellectual advancement and relative 'freedom' that the Islamic world enjoyed in his time, compared to the Latin West in the twelfth century, even though the balance has now changed. In other words, the Intellectuals look at this from the perspective that when the world of Islam 'spoke' through the writings of the Muslim philosophers, such as Ibn Rushd, the world of the Latin West 'censored'. In CE 1209, for example, Arabic books were banned by the University of Paris, and in CE 1210, a synod decreed the banning of Aristotle's books on natural philosophy and any commentaries on them, including that of Ibn Rushd, which had a considerable status at the time.[6] The influence of his works were wide reaching, he made a discernible impact on medieval Jewish philosophy,[7] and his name (and that of Ibn Sīnā) even made it into the Limbo in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, alongside those of Greek philosophers from the ancient world. For the Christian authorities, Averroism symbolised un-orthodoxy and nonconformity, to the extent that it came to be synonymous with a charge of atheism.[8]

In this description, there is a degree of romanticisation of the Islamic environment in which Ibn Rushd was writing. It is true that in Spain at his time, philosophers were closely connected to the Almohad ruler Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf (ruling between CE 1163 and CE 1184), but this did not amount to 'freedom' in an absolute sense. When the philosopher and physician Ibn Ṭufayl introduced Ibn Rushd to Abū Yaʿqūb, Ibn Rushd did not initially feel safe to express his philosophical views. When Abū Yaʿqūb asked him whether philosophers thought the heavens were created or eternal, Ibn Rushd was afraid to answer: 'confusion and fear took hold of me, and I began making excuses and denying that I had ever concerned myself with philosophic learning'. It was only after

Abū Yaʿqūb himself showed knowledge of philosophy and enumerated some of what the philosophers had said that Ibn Rushd felt at ease to speak his mind.[9] But Ibn Rushd did not always enjoy this sort of 'freedom': Abū Yaʿqūb's son and successor Yaʿqūb al-Manṣūr (ruling between CE 1184 and CE 1199) succumbed to pressure from the jurists who considered that Ibn Rushd's philosophical writings deviated from their teachings and thus from Islam. He was convicted of holding heretical views, forced to leave Cordoba and live in exile in Marakesh. The edict against him was lifted only towards the end of his life. Thus, his philosophical writings were burnt in Islamic Spain by an order of the ruler before the Christians forbade their reading in the Latin West.[10]

Nevertheless, the fame attributed to Ibn Rushd, illustrious or otherwise, has been transformed into a 'spirit' that the Intellectuals of today consider to be lacking in their societies. The accomplishments of the Islamic world that were achieved in the past have been replaced by achievements by the West, which as a result possesses cultural and political dominance. The Arab-Islamic world, on the other hand, apart from its importance as a source for oil, lags far behind. Moreover, in view of the restrictions imposed on thinkers in the Arab-Islamic world of today by totalitarian governments, Ibn Rushd serves to feed the fantasies about possible freedom of thought that might one day replace the intellectual oppression they experience.

There is yet another reason for Intellectuals to raise the flag of Ibn Rushd. It is what he symbolised for the old school of 'Orientalism' led by Ernest Renan (CE 1823–92), and which many thinkers, including Islamists, Apologists (and Orientalists), have reacted against. The thrust of Renan's view, as Jabiri sums it up, is that the Islamic religion is intrinsically inclined to oppress intellectual activities. Thus Arabic-Islamic philosophy could not be a product of that tradition; it is merely a cheap imitation of Greek philosophy.[11]

Renan was a prolific writer. Among his writings are essays in philosophy, the histories of religions and of languages, etc. Of these, he wrote on the Islamic tradition, having taken a special interest in Ibn Rushd in his doctorate thesis, published in 1852 under the title, *Averroès et L'Averroisme*. But it is not for no reason that Intellectuals and other thinkers should react negatively to Renan's writings. His supremacist attitude towards Islam, and indeed, the Semitic tradition as a whole, could not be concealed despite his attempts to convince his audience that his approach to his object of study is objective:

> We often speak of an Arabic science or an Arabic philosophy, and indeed for a century or two in the Middle Ages, the Arabs

> were our masters. But this was until we recognised the Greek origin of Arabic science and philosophy. The latter were but a petty translation of Greek science and philosophy. Once the authentic Greece was discovered, these puny translations became without an object, and it is for a reason that all of the philologists of the Renaissance undertook a real crusade against it. Examined closely, this Arabic science had nothing Arab to it, the content was purely Greek, among those who created it, none was a real Semite, they were Spanish and Persians writing in Arabic. The philosophic role of the Jews during the Middle Ages was also that of mere interpreters. The Jewish philosophy of that era was Arabic philosophy without modification. A single page by Roger Bacon contains more of a true scientific spirit than all this second-hand science, most certainly to be considered as a link to the [Greek] tradition, but void of any originality.[12]

Christianity also had its problems. Not denying the obscurantism that characterised part of its history, he considers it to have cleansed itself, to his satisfaction, from the Semitic spirit and has advanced forward:

> The victory of Christianity was not assured until it completely broke away from its Judaic layer, when it returned to what it had been on the highest conscience of its founder, to be a product disengaged from the narrow hindrances of the Semitic mind.[13]

When later, in the light of new sources on Ibn Rushd, Renan felt the need to revise his book *Averroès et l'Averroisme*, he allotted Ibn Rushd a unique place in the Islamic tradition. Renan still maintained that the Arabs did not do more than passively adopt the Greek teachings, which in the seventh and eighth centuries played an important role among the existing cultures of the Orient. He continued to insist that the Arabs did not accept the works of Aristotle based on any independent theoretical reasoning or analysis. Instead, they accepted his texts as a dogma, and made him into 'their authorised master'.[14] Upon revising his work, Renan was willing to concede that Arabic philosophy had shown some signs of originality during the eleventh and twelfth centuries and that he had underestimated the intellectual merit of Ibn Rushd. Renan's broad take on this is that '[t]he intellectual development represented by Arab scholars up to the end of the twelfth century was superior to that of the Christian world'.

But this success on the individual level did not translate unto the institutional level, because Islamic theology represented an insurmountable barrier. Thus, 'the Muslim philosopher remained an amateur [in philosophy]' and, when fanaticism threatened Muslim rulers, 'the philosopher disappeared, manuscripts were destroyed by a royal decree, and the Christians alone remembered that the Islamic tradition had its scholars and thinkers'.[15] In other words, for Renan the end of the twelfth century when Ibn Rushd died (CE 1198) brought an end to the life of Arabic-Islamic philosophy, if there had been such a thing.

Renan's view of Arabic-Islamic philosophy as being an imitation of Greek philosophy is grossly mistaken. A few examples should suffice to dispel Renan's assumptions. In his *al-Fikr al-ʿIlmī al-ʿArabī* (Arabic Scientific Thought), George Saliba traces the rise of Arabic sciences, showing the intellectual heritage the Arabs borrowed from the Greeks but also how they developed and corrected some of their premises on certain subjects, thus producing innovative theses. In the case of astronomy, Saliba shows how the Arabs developed this science in a new direction, moving away from the Greek focus on astrology and abandoning some of the premises Ptolemy had established in this field.[16] Far from accepting Greek thought as a given, Saliba cites and discusses a number of Arabic treatises critical of Greek thought, e.g. Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. CE 925) writing *al-Shukūk ʿalā Jālīnos* (Doubts about Galen); Ibn Haytham (d. CE 1040) writing *al-Shukūk ʿalā Btalmiyos* (Doubts about Ptolemy); *al-Istidrāk ʿalā Btalmiyos* (Correcting Ptolemy) by an unknown author around the middle of the eleventh century.[17]

The study of logic is one of the other fields that Muslim philosophers developed. Scholars in this field speak of an 'Aristotelian turn' in the history of Arabic logic. Tony Street argues that with Fārābī, model logic developed beyond the 'Aristotelian texts themselves'.[18] Critical of the assumption that Arabic logic is no more than one of the 'systems of late antiquity', Street argues that having translated into Arabic all of the Aristotelian logical treatises by CE 900, Muslim philosophers turned to developing and elaborating this discipline. Aristotle, he holds, 'ceases by the end of the twelfth century to be a significant coordinate for logicians writing in Arabic – that place is filled by Avicenna'.[19]

The attitudes of Renan and other like-minded Orientalists to the Islamic tradition were partly responsible for the regressive attitude the reformers adopted in relation to the Islamic tradition. One of the earliest reactions to Renan was that put by the Reformist Jamal al-Din

al-Afghani (1838 or 1839 to 1897) in a correspondence he had with Renan. Al-Afghani did not question Renan's assumptions about the incompatibility of Islam and philosophy. Instead, he defended those features characteristic of religious belief that he believed empowered religion, even if this empowerment came at the expense of intellectual freedom. Religions, he wrote to Renan, are the means by which 'nations have emerged from barbarism and marched toward a more advanced civilisation'.[20] This successful egression was not empowered by reason, but rather by an 'obedience' to a 'supreme Being' to whom the conditions and mysteries of life were attributed. The belief in this Being came to be *imposed* by 'educators' who also forbade any questioning of this Being.[21] While disagreeing with Renan about the substance of Arabic-Islamic philosophy, noting that under Islam Greek philosophy was 'developed' and 'perfected', Jamal al-Din adopts the view that religion and philosophy are irreconcilable: 'Religion imposes on man its faith and its belief, whereas philosophy frees him of it totally or in part.'[22] The differences between the two mean that each feels threatened by, and constantly seeks to eliminate, the other.[23]

Afghani's response to Renan is telling of the dilemma with which the reformers of the nineteenth century were faced. As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, the Reformist movement, of which Afghani was a leading figure, did not go the full way in carrying out modernisation as it had intended. Instead, it moved in a conservative direction. This is because the reformers faced the problem of having to open up fully to modernising trends, during a time when modernity was associated with the West, with its imperial agenda and the cause of their deteriorating political situation, and where the views of Renan were commonplace. In their minds, modernising came to mean Westernising and submitting to the imperial powers.

The Intellectuals of today are still operating within a similar reactionary attitude. They have justifiably reacted against Renan's views but, instead of going beyond them, they have opted for the opposite view of Afghani. That is, they attempt to present philosophy as the dominant current in the Islamic tradition. They further paint a picture of philosophy as if it is/was an intrinsically rationalist current conducive to generating liberal intellectual trends, and Ibn Rushd, in particular, serves as an ideal model towards accomplishing the goal of restoring such ideals. To borrow Adonis's terminology, they see philosophy as a *changing* current through which to reform the 'Arabic intellect' and ultimately the 'establishment'.

Inconsistencies in Ibn Rushd's thought: religion and philosophy

Ibn Rushd's intellectual interests were not limited to philosophy as such. He also wrote extensively on the religious sciences and the relation between science and religion. As George Hourani notes, the number of treatises he wrote that were dedicated to Islamic sciences, particularly the lengthy work on law *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*, can only indicate his sincere commitment to the religion of Islam.[24] Indeed, in his *Faṣl al-Maqāl* (Decisive Treatise), Ibn Rushd is at pains to demonstrate that the truth of philosophy is the same as that of religion.[25] There remains, however, the question of consistency in his views. More precisely, was he committed to the so-called philosophical and rational views about religion in all his writings?

Of the more cited texts of Ibn Rushd's philosophical views of religion is *Faṣl al-Maqāl*, the context of which is discussed in Chapter 4. In this work, Ibn Rushd argues that Islam commands the study of philosophy as well as logic. One would, therefore, expect that Ibn Rushd would emphasise this religious obligation in other works, notably his treatises on jurisprudence (*fiqh*). In his *al-Ḍarūrī fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Essentials in the Principles of Jurisprudence), however, he deems it inappropriate to apply logic to the study of *fiqh*. This work is intended as a summary of Ghazālī's *al-Musṭaṣfā*, which commends the use of logic in the science of *fiqh*. In this treatise, Ibn Rushd says of *fiqh* that it is a science that 'gives the laws and cases by which to guide the mind to the truth'.[26] Recognising the difficulties of addressing new issues that are not already explicitly addressed by the predecessors (i.e. the Prophet and his companions), it became necessary to establish procedures and enact rulings to assist the minds of people when examining or confronted with such matters. But while Ibn Rushd concurs with Ghazālī on many of the issues he addresses in *al-Musṭaṣfā*, he disagrees with him on the application of logic to the science of *fiqh*. 'Let us keep each [science] to its [proper] place, for anyone who tries to learn more than one thing at a time, he fails to learn anything.'[27] Why, if religion commands the study of logic, does Ibn Rushd opine that the religious sciences cannot avail themselves of it?

One possible answer is that *al-Ḍarūrī* is the first book in which Ibn Rushd discusses the work of al-Ghazālī, that is, it was written before *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* and *Faṣl al-Maqāl*;[28] Ibn Rushd perhaps had a change of mind on the subject. Another way of approaching *Faṣl*, however, is to think of it as a work similar to Machiavelli's *Prince*, that is, a book written with the intention of being used as an

advice to the ruler. Muhsin Mahdi and Charles Butterworth have noted that since 1859, when the manuscript of *Faṣl* was discovered by Marcus Joseph Muller, the text has by convention been the first part of a trilogy, followed by *Kashfʿan Manāhij al-Adilla fīʿAqāʾid al-Milla* (Uncovering the Methods of Proofs with Respect to the Beliefs of the Religious Community), and by a *Ḍamīma* (Appendix). They note, however, that *Ḍamīma* should be considered as an Epistle Dedicatory. Most likely, Butterworth thinks, it was addressed to the ruler Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf.[29] This is a persuasive argument, especially in view of the explicitly formal dedication by which the text begins: 'May God prolong your might, continue to bless you, and hide you from the sources of calamities!'[30]

If this is a plausible line of argument, Ibn Rushd might have intended *Faṣl* to be a manual for politics in the form of an 'Islamic' tool the Almohade sovereign could use to rebut the opposition to the study of philosophy the jurists were mounting at this time. Were this to be the case, then Ibn Rushd did not intend *Faṣl* to present a philosophical reading of Islam, but he might have wanted it to *appear* that it was. As noted in Chapter 4, in *Faṣl*, Ibn Rushd at times alternates between the Qurʾanic language and that of Aristotelian philosophy without giving adequate context to either. He clumsily applies Aristotelian modes of reasoning to Qurʾanic terms of reference. In particular, he conflates the Aristotelian understanding of demonstration with the Qurʾanic term *burhān*, the former being based on human speculation at the highest sophisticated level, while the latter is based on the authority of God's revealed Word.[31]

Ibn Rushd's so-called 'liberal' attitude in *Faṣl* does not withstand close scrutiny. Combining successfully Islam and philosophy does not rest on his 'philosophical' or 'tolerant' approach to both. The success of combining them ultimately rests on suppressing from the majority, or the intellectual commoners, the true meaning of certain verses in the Qurʾan. Ibn Rushd cannot be more explicit in his ('illiberal') attitude. In a Farabian-like distinction, he measures people's intellectual capacities on the scale of the cognitive ends of the syllogistic crafts.[32] He divides into three kinds people's intellectual capacities *vis-à-vis* their understandings of sharīʿa. The majority are intellectually limited to the level of rhetoric, that is, they can respond only to persuasion; others are ranked higher, but can reach no higher than the level of dialectic; and a few have attained the level of demonstration (*al-burhāniyyūn*) and are capable of delivering certitude in their allegorical interpretation (*ahl al-taʾwīl al-yaqīnī*). But the people of the last category should not make their knowledge known to others:

> This [sort of] *ta'wīl* is not meant to be made known to the people of dialectic, let alone to the general public. For whenever any of these allegorical interpretations is made known to people who are not proficient in them, especially the demonstrative *ta'wīlāt* – because of their remoteness from the shared cognition [common to most people], it will result in disbelief (*kufr*) to both, he who makes it known and he to whom it is made known.[33]

Ibn Rushd maintains this 'illiberal' attitude consistently elsewhere in his philosophical writings. In his commentary on Plato's *Republic*, a similar sentiment is expressed, but here the equivalent of *ta'wīl* is called a 'lie'. Commenting on Book III of the *Republic*, the general theme of which is the education of the guardians, Ibn Rushd, approving of Plato's views, notes that the chiefs and the righteous from among the guardians:

> ought to be exhorted with exceptional diligence for zeal for the truth . . . So if some artisan or some other of them be found to be lying, he ought to be punished. The multitude ought to be told that when one of the multitude lies to the chiefs, there is a possibility of harm resembling the harm that comes when an invalid lies to the physician about his sickness. *But the chiefs' lying to the multitude will be appropriate for them in the respect in which a drug is appropriate for a disease.* Just as it is only the physician who prescribes a drug, so it is the king who lies to the multitude concerning affairs of the realm [emphasis added].[34]

On women

Among other 'liberal' traits attributed to Ibn Rushd is his progressive attitude to the role of women in society.[35] In his commentary on Plato's *Republic*, Ibn Rushd is indeed approving of the view articulated in the *Republic* that women should be accorded the same opportunities and duties as those accorded men:

> women, in so far as they are of one kind with men, necessarily share in the end of man. They will differ only in less or more; i.e. the man in most human activities is more diligent than the women, though it is not impossible that women should be more diligent in some activities, such as is thought concerning the art of practical music. . . . Similarly, too, since some women are

> formed with eminence and a praiseworthy disposition, it is not impossible that there be philosophers and rulers among them.[36]

Further, it is only because women's potentials are not explored that they do not assume the same responsibilities as men:

> The competence of women is unknown, however, in these cities since they are only taken in them for procreation and hence are placed at the service of their husbands and confined to procreation, upbringing, and suckling. This nullifies their [other] activities.[37]

It is due to the lack of recognition of women's potentials that they are considered as 'a burden upon the men of these cities' and it is this that is 'one of the causes of the poverty of these cities'.[38]

Ibn Rushd seems to be tacitly approving of Plato's views or, at least, he does not contest them. He does feel the need, however, to qualify or explain why it is not problematic for women to be naked with men when they participate in gymnastic training together: 'He said (referring to Plato): They have no cover on them when they practice gymnastic with the men, since they will be devoid of [everything save] virtue.'[39] According to his commentary on Plato's *Republic*, Ibn Rushd's views on the role of women in society appear liberal indeed. But to what extent can one infer that Ibn Rushd was generally committed to these views? That is, does he consistently uphold these views in his other work?

In his *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*, Ibn Rushd discusses a number of issues related to women from which one may infer different aspects in his attitude towards the role of women in an Islamic society. The *Bidāya* is a treatise belonging to the classical genre of *ikhtilāf*. That is, its subject matter pertains to enumerating the substance of the main books of *fiqh*, including points of agreement as well as disagreement between the various schools.[40] R. Brunshvig dates the completion of the treatise to the years CE 1167–8, by which time Ibn Rushd's thought had matured, and he would have been well acquainted with Greek thought, though perhaps he would not yet have written his commentary on Plato's *Republic*.

As Brunshvig notes reluctantly, Ibn Rushd's position on women (as well as on minors and slaves) in *Bidāya* may have a hint of liberalism to it.[41] He is inclined to favour relatively moderate regulations pertaining to the guardianship (*wilāya*) over women, especially when it is related to a woman's choice in marriage (*nikāḥ*). But, as Brunshvig also warns, it is best not to exaggerate Ibn Rushd's

liberalism on this matter. Indeed, none of the views he articulates in his commentary on Plato's *Republic* are anywhere implied in *Bidāya*. The various concessions he advances in favour of giving women the choice in marriage are to be allowed because they do not have the right to divorce as men do (*li-anna al-rajul yamluku al-ṭalāq idhā balagha wa-lā tamlukuhu al-marʾa*).

Ibn Rushd asserts his conservatism on another point, which is his position on the Imāma of women in prayer, that is, whether it is permitted for a woman to lead a congregation in prayer. He is aware that other pious figures have permitted this. He cites, for example, that Shāfiʿī had permitted a woman to lead other women in prayer, with Abū Thawr and al-Ṭabarī even permitting her to lead both men and women. But then he notes that the majority prohibited it. He opts for the conservative view of the majority, noting that 'a known practice in prayer is that women should stand behind men; therefore it is obvious that their being at the front is not permitted'. To endorse this view he cites a hadith 'Keep them behind insofar as Allāh has kept them behind'.[42]

There is yet another reason why one may have further doubts regarding Ibn Rushd's liberalism *vis-à-vis* women. Ibn Rushd, as many of his writings suggest, holds a very high opinion of Aristotle's views. In one of his treatises on logic, he writes that 'one of the worst things a later scholar can do is to deviate from Aristotle's teaching and follow a path other than Aristotle's'.[43] It is very probable, then, that Ibn Rushd would not have written a commentary on Plato's *Republic* if he had access to Aristotle's *Politics*. This is not an overstated argument, especially as he alludes to this very point early on in his treatise:

> The first part of this art (i.e. political science) is in Aristotle's book known as the *Nicomachea*, and the second in his book known as the *Governance* [*Politics*] and also in this book of Plato's that we intend to explain since Aristotle's book on governance has not yet fallen into our hands.[44]

It is, then, not unreasonable to suggest that Ibn Rushd would have adopted Aristotle's views in *Politics* had it been available to him. More precisely, as opposed to Plato's relatively open views of the role of women in society, Ibn Rushd would have opted for those of Aristotle. While Aristotle allows women to be trained and educated and to reach a certain excellence, the source of this excellence is always subordinate to that of men in the state:

> A freeman rules a slave in one way, the male rules the female in another . . . The slave does not have the deliberative part of the soul at all; the woman has it, but it has no authority.[45]

Ibn Rushd's contemporaneity?

It is difficult to envisage a way by which one can transfer or import to the contemporary scene other aspects of Ibn Rushd's political views, particularly those views pertaining to the ethics of conduct in times of war. In his commentary on Plato's *Republic*, he does not advance many of his own views on the subject of war. In one place, he seems inclined, perhaps hesitantly, to go along with Plato that there is no point in 'coercing under a virtuous governance one who has already come of age and grown up'.[46] But where Plato holds that laws should be enacted to limit people of the same class from committing excess cruelty against each other during times of strife, such as destroying houses or enslaving others,[47] Ibn Rushd does not advance his view. He simply adds that 'what Plato asserts differs from what many Lawgivers assert'.[48]

In the section he devotes to *jihād* in his *Bidāya*, however, he elaborates his views on the same subject, advancing opinions that are contrary in spirit to those of Plato. Thus '[h]arm allowed to be inflicted upon the enemy can be to property, life, or personal liberty, that is enslavement and ownership'.[49] The enemy is defined as 'all of the polytheists' based on Q. 8: 39, 'fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is all for Allāh'. Only the Ethiopians and the Turks are excepted, because of a ruling based on a hadith reported by Mālik (although its authenticity is not asserted). The condition permitting a declaration of war is linked to the invitation of non-Muslims to Islam, and a war cannot be started until they have received the invitation and refused it.[50] Moreover, whereas Christians and Jews (and Zoroastrians) are not generally regarded as 'polytheists', this does not seem to be the case according to Ibn Rushd. Polytheists, in his section on who the enemy is, include at least Christians. The distinction he makes is between polytheists who are the People of the Book, and polytheists who are not.[51] He singles out monks from among the polytheists for possible lenient treatment, holding that whereas harm inflicted upon the enemy in war is permitted, including harm upon women and children, there is no consensus as to whether monks should be released if they are captured. If it is agreed to have them released, they must pay *jizya*, a poll tax, in accordance with the rules that apply to the *dhimmī* (People of the Book). As for women,

if caught as captives, they are not to be slain, provided they did not engage in the fighting.[52]

No doubt these views of Ibn Rushd are typical of his period, and one cannot judge them in today's normative values without falling into the misapprehensions a separation of more than 800 years of political ideas inevitably engenders. Further, it is to be remembered that Ibn Rushd was writing not only during a time when all cultures had different political values to those of today but also during a time when Islam's position as a political power in the world was very different to its position today. This is most evident when Ibn Rushd discusses the theme of when it is permitted to conclude a truce (*ṣulḥ*) with the enemy. Taking for granted many of the privileges a dominant power has, he is very reluctant to give reasons legitimating concessions, let alone a truce, in time of war. The main controversy in relation to a truce is whether the verse enjoining peace in the Qur'an (Q. 8: 61) – 'and if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it, and trust in Allah' – has been abrogated by those verses enjoining war against the unbelievers in absolute terms (Q. 9: 5; 9: 29) – 'slay the idolaters wherever ye find them; fight those who do not believe in Allah nor the Last Day' – or does it merely restrict them?[53] It needs no explaining that the language he uses does not bode well in today's political rhetoric. On the basis of some of his rhetoric, and if read without due context to his own time, Ibn Rushd might be regarded as closer in his views to the supporters of al-Qāʿida than a model of enlightenment.

This is not to judge and condemn Ibn Rushd's ideas based on contemporary political values and expectations. Rather, it is to show that when the Intellectuals call for the adoption of the Averroist spirit to restore liberalism, focusing on those ideas that paint a rosy and liberal picture of him, they are being selective in their readings. Jabiri, the strongest proponent of Ibn Rushd, is not completely oblivious to the less appealing features of his hero's ideas when read through the lenses of the twentieth century. In order to 'abrogate' the unappealing side of Ibn Rushd's ideas, Jabiri stresses that it is the axiomatic approach to his subjects of studies that is most attractive, i.e. Ibn Rushd's ability to approach a subject based on its internal argumentation, and not on its hypothesis.[54] He was able to apply this approach both to philosophy as well as Islam, thus giving justice to each without negating the hypothesis of one by the argumentation of the other.[55]

An additional example of this axiomatic approach, according to Jabiri, is Ibn Rushd's talent of reading and interpreting Aristotle through Aristotle's way of thinking and in the context of Greek

thought. One might ask why, if this is the case, Jabiri does not read Ibn Rushd the same way, that is, read and judge Ibn Rushd based on his own ideas in the context of their own time, and without importing them to the contemporary scene.

This is not to divorce politics from intellectual pursuits, but there are more credible and scholarly ways than this of exploring the *turāth* as well as investigating related political dynamics. Saliba's study, mentioned above, is a case in point. In exploring the development of *ʿilm al-falak* (astronomy) in the Islamic tradition, Saliba is attentive to the dynamics whereby political power has an impact on the standard of knowledge within a given civilisation. His approach stipulates that:

> There is a dialectical relationship between science and the social factors that allow it to emerge. For it is [in fact] the social factors that support the rise of a science. The science itself then creates a particular social atmosphere, endowed with [certain] characteristics that will, in turn, change social relations [in a way] that would allow certain things to happen.[56]

Without attempting to import any of his findings to address contemporary political concerns, Saliba's research nevertheless uncovers ideological assumptions pertaining to the *turāth*. The dominant assumptions had been that Ghazālī's attack on the philosophers brought to a halt scientific innovations in the Islamic world, signalling thereafter the 'age of intellectual decline' (*ʿaṣr al-inḥiṭāṭ*). In showing that *ʿilm al-falak* was developed by the Muslims, that they corrected some of the erroneous Greek premises of this science, and that this science developed further post-Ghazālī, Saliba aptly dispelled many of the scholarly premises that were rooted in ideological assumptions and prejudices that some Orientalists had held.

Conclusion

In his film *al-Maṣīr* (Destiny), which won the 1997 Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, the Egyptian director Yusuf Chahine takes as his central theme the experiences of Ibn Rushd, his relationship with the Caliph al-Manṣūr and the opposition of the conservative jurists to his thought. He further uses this medieval episode in the history of Islam as an analogy to the contemporary rise of religious fanaticism in the Arab world and its threat to intellectual freedom. Some critics of the film noted that Chahine's film is not about Ibn

Rushd's life experiences and thought. Rather, it is more about Chahine's own trials and ordeals with the authorities and the Islamists in modern-day Egypt.[57] Nevertheless and regardless of the merit of the film and its mangling of history, the generous response to it would be to say that Chahine did not set out to write a historical study or direct a documentary, but to direct a film. Accordingly, it is to be judged as a work of art aided by fiction, and not on the basis of it being a record of history. For a film director to 're-write history' is less problematic than for Intellectuals to do so by design. It is true that like Chahine, the Intellectuals in the Arab world have gone through terrible ordeals in their struggle for intellectual freedom. Like Chahine, perhaps, the Intellectuals look to Ibn Rushd as a source, and even a fantasy, from which to call for freedom. Alas even the fantasy is stuck in the past!

Conclusion

To search is always honourable. To find is often worrying
Slimane Benaissa

> History is one of the subjects that are highly prone to falsification (*tazwīr*) and distortion (*taḥrīf*), because whoever is in charge of recording it cannot be [completely] impartial, even if he wanted to. . . .
>
> History is not simply a recording of the facts and events that have occurred, but it is, in the first instance, the memory of the future. Whoever records it does so consciously and for a particular purpose, and this is how history becomes a craft (*ṣināʿa*). Even those who are defeated, while writing their history, relate to the past with the aim of exporting the possibilities of victory to the future.[1]

In this quotation, ʿAbd al-Rahman Munif sums up neatly the general and complex dynamics involved in the crafting of the past, present and future, and the influence that perceptions of them may have on human activity. Were one to compare Munif's paradigm to the dominant contemporary Arabic discourses discussed in this study in terms of their relationship to the history of the *turāth*, the state of their intellectual approaches would seem even more deplorable than that of even his worst case scenario, i.e. 'those who are defeated'.

It is, unfortunately, true that the minds of most, if not all, of the inhabitants of the Arab world are overpowered by the political situation in which they find themselves. This political situation is bound to condition, in different ways, any discourse that emerges therein or thereof. As Munif puts it:

> Politics . . . defines for us how we can live, think and behave, perhaps even how we dream! For this reason, politics is present and has an influence in every part of our lives, and in every step we take. We cannot ignore it or flee from it, even if we wanted to, it chases after us like our shadow, and weighs heavily (*tajthum*) over us like a perpetual nightmare (*kābūs dā'im*). Deluded (*wāhim*) is he who thinks he is capable of ignoring or transcending it.[2]

Amin al-Mahdī describes the implications of this vivid nightmare as if there are now black lists on which ideas, innovations and scholars are being recorded when they do not meet the 'expression of opinion' guidelines formulated and sanctioned by the political and religious authorities. This, he suggests, is an effective recipe to paralyse the intellectual faculties without which a tradition cannot have an intellectual presence, and the loss of which results in it 'exiting history' or dying out.[3]

The dominant Arabic political discourses, however, have allowed politics to have an excessive impact on history and on how they perceive the *turāth*. If the historian is disposed to enlist politics in the service of the historical narrative that he crafts, as Munif indeed suggests, then the Islamists, Apologists and Intellectuals are enlisting and politicising history in the service of political programmes instead.

This study has presented a critique of varying aspects of these three discourses in relation to their representations of the *turāth* and the link they make between it and the present. Common to these discourses is an arbitrarily selective reading of it to suit their respective agendas. For the Islamists, what is of merit and substance in the *turāth* is its religio-political component. For them, authentic Islam has a political shape and structure, albeit one of their own devising. They are selective in their readings of the foundation texts, but nevertheless still claim complete faithfulness to them in their totality, and claim a monopoly of an authentic realisation of Islam.

The Apologists do not differ much from the Islamists in terms of their approach to the *turāth*. They are equally selective in their readings and interpretations of the foundation texts and are ready to claim Islamic authenticity for their readings of Islam. They differ from the Islamists, however, in the goal they aim for in their writings. In many respects, the Apologists' discourse is conditioned by the Islamists' politicisation of Islam, and most often it stands as a reaction to the Islamists. Accordingly, their discourse, while maintaining a place for an Islamic vocabulary, endeavours to extricate any substantial role Islam may play in the political sphere.

For the Intellectuals, the body of philosophical ideas that permeates throughout the various intellectual currents that are part of the *turāth* are what is central to it and what should be considered relevant. For them, medieval Islamic philosophy exhibited 'liberal' and 'rational' values that they perceive as defining progress, and they see their duty to restore such values so that they may be put in the service of contemporary Arab societies. In doing so, like the Islamists and the Apologists, they are selective in their choices of the philosophical texts they emphasise, and ignore the dogmatic and less appealing components that Islamic philosophy also exhibited.

The dialectics between these dominant discourses in relation to the *turāth* are such that they have reached a stage whereby the present is no longer conceived of as history in the making and to be recorded for future generations. If analysed in the light of Munif's view of the crafting of history, the Islamists, Apologists and Intellectuals are seeking, from a defeated political position, not to export a victory for their own positions and ideals to the future, but to relive and restore the *turāth*, as recorded by the victorious. In effect, they have replaced today's authoritarian regimes and figures they are resisting by other figures and processes from the past, virtually appointing them as their masters. In other words, for these currents, the present and the future are dictated by the past. It is as if the contemporary component of history, that is, that aspect that stands as a continuation of a historical process and that may act as a source of norms for the future, has ceased to be necessary, let alone relevant.

I noted in the early chapters that while essentially it is due to the political malaise of the Arab world that the *turāth* is hijacked for political ends and agenda by these currents, this is also generating a problem of an intellectual order. This intellectual problem is, at least, of two facets. The first has to do with the cognitive understanding of the *turāth*: with the excessive emphasis on making it relevant to the contemporary Arab scene, the *turāth* is increasingly ceasing to stand as a body of ideas belonging to and defined by particular historical eras and circumstances. In this sense, it neither stands as the intellectual heritage that contemporary Arab societies are temporally removed from, nor is it capable of meeting the challenges a contemporary intellectual setting necessitates.

The other intellectual problem has to do with the clash that characterises the encounters between these discourses instead of their multiplicity. In other words, the emphasis in these discourses is more on the primacy of each discourse rather than the dynamics and

substance of the goal it seeks to achieve. ʿAli Harb sums up this point in a dramatic but cogent manner:

> It is time, that [we] as thinkers, transcend the clash of discourses and the rivalry over (*mufāḍala* [*sic*]) [political or intellectual] programs, [and begin] investigating the dynamics that we have established alongside our rhetoric (*maqūlāt*) and slogans (*shiʿārāt*). For we have established a terrorist relationship with freedom, approached Marxism with a theological mentality, exercised objectivity in a mythical fashion, sought unity through a mentality of single group partisanship (*ʿaqliyya aḥādiyya fiʾawiyya ḥizbiyya*), and called for Marxism and Socialism in a manner characteristic of an imperial or absolutist totalitarianism. As for Islam, we call for it and we exercise it in an arrogant manner (*ʿalā naḥw istikbārī*) not in a monotheistic manner (*tawḥīdī*).[4]

The *turāth* and its 'contemporary' prospects

In the Introduction, I posed the question as to whether it is possible to explore the *turāth* in such a way that it is remembered, not called back to life, acknowledged but not sanctified, inherited but not commanded to serve the present. There are, of course, Arab scholars who are engaged in the study of the *turāth* to further its understanding according to specific eras and within a set of ideas, doing so through the disciplines of history, philology and philosophy. In Harb's words, these scholars are those 'who are not concerned with producing an Arabic philosophy specific to the Arabs, rather they are concerned with producing a philosophy specific to every lover (*muḥibb*) of philosophy, or anyone who is passionate (*yahwā*) to philosophise (*tafalsuf*)'.[5] As might be expected, by virtue of their scientific/scholarly approaches, they focus on specific topics and do not seek to politicise their subjects of study. Accordingly, they do not have a 'discourse' as such, but their contributions are without a doubt immense, and perhaps have the antidote to some of the problems arising from the three discourses I have examined.

There are other ways of studying the *turāth* with an eye for contemporary concerns and challenges, for example, by shifting the focus from reliving or restoring the past to understanding the dynamics of its cultural and intellectual evolution to the present. Such an approach entails an open and critical reading of the classical texts, void of the tendencies to 're-construct' and romanticise the past. In this sense, the value of Fārābī's 'virtuous city', for example, is that it presents

an amalgam of different civilisations, transmitting novel ideas and developing them. Its relation to the present has to do with presenting in the Islamic *milieu* one of the first, but *not perfect*, political theories of the state. Its merit then is not that it represents an ideal of a lost city of justice, reason and fraternity. Since it never was that, any attempt of restoring it is misconceived.

If the Islamic tradition as a living civilisation is in danger of 'exiting history' or dying out, as Mahdi suggests, it is then of capital importance that the door of disagreement (*bāb al-ikhtilāf*) be opened, allowing an *ikhtilāf* that permits all groups to take part in a constructive debate about the *turāth* and other matters. This study has attempted to show that that said to be the Constant current (*al-thābit*) in the Islamic tradition exhibits characteristics of change in the same way as that which is said to be the Changing current (*mutaḥawwil*) exhibits characteristics of constancy. Accordingly, the Islamic tradition has revolved, can still and indeed should revolve, around different and differing intellectual trends and modes of thinking. The duty of the thinkers, then, is to allow scope for and play a part in the development of the *turāth*, not attempt to restore it or recycle it.

To end on a *traditional* note, it is related that Imam ʿAlī Ibn al-Ḥusayn (Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn), great-grandson of Muhammad, was asked: 'Is it fanaticism if a person loves his people?' To which he responded: 'It is not fanaticism if a person loves his people; fanaticism is when a person considers the vices of his people to be better than the virtues of others.'

Glossary

ʿadl	justice
aḥaqqiyya	priority of claim
ahl al-kitāb	People of the Book
ālā	tool, machine (pl., *ālāt*)
alfāẓ	expressions
allā ʿaqlāniyya	irrationality
ʿalmānawiyya	ideological secularism
ʿalmāniyya/ ilmāniyya	(inclusive) secularism
amāna	religious trust
al-amr bi al-maʿrūf	commanding right
ʿaqd siyāsī	political covenant
ʿāqil	wise/intelligent person
ʿaqila	to understand
ʿaql	intellect
al-ʿaql al-munfaʿil	Passive Intellect
al-ʿaql al-mustafād	Acquired Intellect
aṣāla	authenticity
asbāb al-nuzūl	circumstances of revelations
baḥth	study
bashar	people
bashariyya	humanity
bāṭin	esoteric
bi al-fiʿl	existing in actuality
bi al-quwwa	existing in potentiality
bilā kayf	without asking how
burhān	demonstrative truth (philosophy)/ proof from God (Qurʾan)
ḍaʿīf	weak/less authoritative (hadith)
dakhīl	foreign

ḍālla/ḍalāl	errant
daʿwa	call/convocation (to Islam)
al-daʿwa al-niḍāliyya	a call for struggle (to bring about the islamisation of the state and society)
dawla islāmiyya	Islamic state
dhātiyyat al-umma	the identity of the Islamic community
dhimmī	People of the Book
ḍidd	opposing, in opposition to
fāḍil(a)	virtuous/excellent
falāsifa	philosophers
falsafa	philosophy
faqīh	jurist (pl., *fuqahāʾ*)
fāsida	corrupt
fayḍ	overflow
faẓāẓa	crudeness
fikr	thought
al-fikr al-wāḥid	universal thought
fiqh	jurisprudence
ghalaba	domination
ghilẓa	roughness
ḥadātha	modernity
ḥadāthī	modern
ḥadd	definition
ḥadīth	a saying attributed to Muhammad
ḥākimiyyat Allah	God's complete sovereignty/ governorship
ḥaqīqa	reality, truth
hijra	emigration
ḥiyal	ploys
ḥuffāẓ	memorisers (of the Qurʾan)
al-ḥukamāʾ	wise people, philosophers (s., *ḥakīm*)
ʿibāda	worship
ibdāʿ	innovation
al-ibdāʿ al-insānī	human innovation
iʿjāz	inimitability of the discourse (of the Qurʾan)

ijmāʿ	consensus
ijtihād	reasoning (based on the sources of Law)
ijtimāʿāt	social groupings
ikhtilāf	difference (pl., *ikhtilāfāt*)
al-ikhwān al-muslimūn	Muslim Brotherhood
iktināh	fathom
ʿilm	science/discipline
al-ʿilm al-ilāhī	metaphysics
ʿilm al-lisān	linguistics
al-ʿilm al-madanī	political science
ʿilm al-ṭabīʿa	physics
īmān	faith
imāra	political authority
inḥirāf	deviation
inḥiṭāṭ	decline
inkhirāṭ	participation
iqnāʿ	persuasion
irāda	will
irāda qadīma	eternal will
ishāra	intimation or allusion
ishkāliyya	problématique
iṣlāḥ	reform
al-islām al-siyāsī	political Islam
isnād	a chain of transmission (of a hadith)
istiʿāra	metaphor
istiʿlāʾ	superiority
istimrāriyya	continuity
istinbāṭ	inferring, deducing
istinsākh	transcription
istiṣlāḥ	redressing
ittibāʿiyya	conformity
izāla	eliminating
jadal	disputation; dialectic
jāhiliyya	total ignorance (of God)/ pre-Islamic period
jawhar	essence
jizya	poll tax
jumhūr	general public
juzʾiyyāt	particulars

kalām	theology
kashf	unveiling
khalq	people
khawāṣṣ	the elect, élite
khayrāt	goods, benefits
khilāfa	Caliphate
al-khiṭāb al-ikhwānī	brotherhood discourse
al-khiṭāb al-jihādī	struggle discourse
al-khulafāʾ al-rāshidūn	Rightly Guided Caliphs
khushūʿ	piety
kifāḥ	active struggle
kufr	disbelief
kull	whole/totality
ladhdha	pleasure (pl., *ladhdhāt*)
al-ladhdhāt al-ʿaqliyya	intellectual pleasures
al-ladhdhāt al-ḥissiyya	sensible pleasures
al-ladhdhāt al-khayāliyya	imaginative pleasures
luṭf	illumination
māḍawiyya	a return to the (Islamic principles of the past)
al-madd al-islāmī	Islamic expansion
mādda	matter
al-māddiyya al-tārīkhiyya	historical materialism
madhhab	school of law (pl., *madhāhib*)
madīna	city, polis
al-madīna al-fāḍila	virtuous/excellent city
al-madīna al-jāhiliyya	ignorant city
al-madīna al-jamāʿiyya	democratic city
madrasa	religious school
maḥsūsāt	sensibles
majāz	figurative
makāyid	schemes/ploys/trappings
mamnūʿ	forbidden
al-manhaj al-ilāhī	divine path
al-maʿqūlāt	the intelligibles
maʿrifa	knowledge
al-mashhūrāt	generally accepted matters
maʾṣūla	indigenous
maṭālib khasīsa wāhiya	infamous and feeble pursuits
maṭālib sharīfa ʿāliya	high honourable pursuits

al-mawjūdāt	existent beings
al-mawrūth	that which is transmitted/inherited
milla	religious polity; religion
mithāl	pattern, model
mubāyaʿa	pledge allegiance
mubdiʿān	makers/creators
mughālaba	strife
muḥākāt	imitation
mujaddidūn	reformists/innovators
mujāhada	struggle
muʾminūn	believers
munzal	revealed
muqāwama	resist
muʿtadil	moderate
al-mutaḥawwil	changing
mutakallim	theologian (pl., *mutakallimūn*)
al-mutaqaddimūn	predecessors
mutashābihāt	ambiguous/problematic
mutaṭarrif	extremist
muthaqqaf	intellectual
al-muwaḥḥidūn	those proclaiming divine unity
muwāṣila	connective
nahḍa	renaissance
al-nahyʿan al-munkar	forbidding wrong
nawāmīs muʾallafa	concocted laws
naẓar	theory, speculation
niḥal	religions
nikāḥ	marriage
nuwwāb	agents
qabāʾiḥ	abominations
qahr	coercion
qaṭīʿa	rupture
qiwām	subsistence
qiwāma	guardianship
qiyās	analogy
al-qiyās al-ʿaqlī	rational reasoning
al-qiyās al-ẓannī	doxic syllogism
qudra	capacity; omnipotence (of God)
qurba	pious act

al-quwwa al-mutakhayyila	imaginative faculty
al-quwwa al-nāṭiqa	rational faculty
radda	reactionary position/attitude
al-raʾīs al-awwal	first or chief ruler
raʿiyya	subjects/citizens
rajʿī	backward
ramz	symbolism
riʾāsa	leadership
rubūbiyya	lordship
rūḥ	spirit
ṣaḥīḥ	authoritative (hadith)
al-ṣaḥwa al-islāmiyya	Islamic awakening
al-sāʾis	political practitioner
al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ	pious forefathers/predecessors
Ṣāniʿ	Craftsman/Artisan (God)
ṣayrūra dāʾima	perpetual becoming
shabīha	simulacrum
sharʿ	law
sharīʿa	religious law
shiʾārāt	slogans
shumūliyya	a comprehensive application of Islam in all spheres
ṣifa	attribute (pl., *ṣifāt*)
siyāsa	politics
ṣulḥ	truce
sulṭān	dominion
sunan kawniyya	cosmic norms
Sunna	tradition
ṭāʿa	obedience
taʿaqqul	prudence
tabaʿiyya	conformity, subordination
tafsīr	commentary
taḥkīm	arbitration
taḥlīl bunyawī	structural analysis
taḥlīl tārīkhī	historical analysis
tahwīd	judaisation
tajammuʿ jāhilī	'un-Islamic' society
tajdīd	renewal
takhyīl	producing an imaginative impression

taqaddum	progress
taqaddumī	progressive, open minded
taqiyya	precautionary dissimulation
taqlīd	emulation, imitation
taqlīd al-bāṭil	emulating falsehood
taqlīd al-ḥaqq	emulating truth
taqlīdī	traditional
tarbiya	education
taṣawwur	conception
taṣdīq	assent
tashbīh	simile
taswiya thaqāfiyya	equalisation of knowledge
taʾwīl	allegorical interpretation
taʾwīl al-maʿnā	interpretation extending the message of the meaning of the text
tazyīf	falsification
al-thābit	constant
thaqāfa	civilisation/culture
turāth	tradition/heritage/legacy
al-turāth al-dīnī	religious tradition
al-turāth al-falsafī	philosophical tradition
ulfa	harmony
ulūhiyyat Allah waḥdah	belief in the divinity of God alone
umma	community
al-umūr al-maḥsūsa	sensible things
waḥda	unity
waṣf	description
al-waʿy al-thaqāfī	intellectual consciousness
wirāth	inheritance
wujūd	existence
al-wujūd al-ʿaqlī	mental existence
al-wujūd al-dhātī	essential existence
al-wujūd al-ḥissī	sensible existence
al-wujūd al-khayālī	imaginative existence
al-wujūd al-shabahī	analogical existence
wukalāʾ	proxis
wulāt	rulers

yaʿqil	to intellect
yaqīn	certainty
yasūsu	to manage
yatakhayyal	to imagine
yataṣawwar	to conceive
ẓāhir	exoteric
zaygh	aberration
ẓunūn qawiyya	strong opinions

Notes

Introduction

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2 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the Modern World*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996, p. 217.

3 See, for instance, the forward looking statement known as the Alexandria Statement March 2004, representing the views of a large number of Arab thinkers who met in Egypt and discussed issues to do with reform in the Arab world. Online. Available at: http://www.arabreformforum.com/English/Document.htm (accessed 15 April 2004).

4 Ghassan Finianos, *Islamistes, apologistes et libres penseurs*, Pessac: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2002.

5 The Islamist current, often referred to as Islamic fundamentalism, is a sophisticated system of thought, and merits being regarded as an intellectual approach. On this point, see Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabiʿ, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 2; see also the study by Ahmad S. Moussalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb*, Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1992. I am grateful to Ahmad Moussalli for giving me a copy of his book as well as other materials on the subject.

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10 Mark Bevir, 'On Tradition', *Humanitas*, vol. XIII, no. 2, 2000, pp. 28–53.
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13 Ibid., p. 36.
14 Ibid., p. 37.
15 Ibid., p. 39.
16 Ibid., p. 40.
17 Ibid., p. 32. For another perspective on the issues of *ittibāʿiyya* vs *ibdāʿ*, see Halim Barakat, *al-Mujtamaʿ al-ʿArabī al-Muʿāṣir* (Contemporary Arab Societies), p. 458.
18 For a brief yet comprehensive introduction to the Qurʾan, see Michael Cook, *The Koran: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
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1 The Islamists and the Apologists

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2 Charles Kurzman, 'Liberal Islam: Prospects and Challenges', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1999. See also his Introduction to *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998; see also Radwan Masmoudi, 'The Silenced Majority', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2003. This issue of the journal is dedicated to Liberal Islam.
3 Sayyid Qutb, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾan* (In the Shadow of the Qurʾan), Beirut: Dār al-Sharq, 1982, vol. 1, p. 17.

4 Shahrough Akhavi notes that Qutb holds that 'everything that had happened after 661 (except for the rule of ʿUmar II from 717 to 720) was *jāhilī*'. See 'The Dialectic in Contemporary Egyptian Social Thought: The Scripturalist and Modernist Discourses of Sayyid Qutb and Hasan Hanafi', in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, no. 29, 1997, p. 381.
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24 Aʿrab, *Al-Islām al-Siyāsī wa al-Ḥaʿadātha*, pp. 10–11. Muhammad Jamal Barut, *Yathrib al-Jadīda: al-Ḥarakāt al-Islāmiyya al-Rāhina* (The New Yathrib: Contemporary Islamist Movements), Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 1994, chapter 6. For a comprehensive taxonomy of the various currents in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, see the review by Saʿūd al-Mawlā, 'Ṣunnāʿ al-ʿUnf al-Uṣūlī al-Musallaḥ fī Miṣr: Taḥta Mashraḥat al-Naqd al-Dhātī', in *Al-Nahār* – al-Mulḥaq al-Thaqāfī section, 7 July 2002.

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26 See, for example, Qu'ran (Q.) 14: 44.
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28 Roxanne L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999, pp. 54–5. See also Nazih N. M. Ayubi, 'The Politics of Militant Islamic Movements in the Middle East', in *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 36, 1984, p. 273, and Yvonne Haddad, 'Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival', in John Esposito (ed.), *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 67.
29 Sayyid Qutb, *Dirāsāt Islāmiyya* (Islamic Studies), Beirut: Dār al-Sharq, 1995, p. 244.
30 Ibid., p. 88. Some, in fact, claim a very encompassing role for Islam extending to the scientific disciplines. Accordingly they quote certain verses in the Qur'an that mention stars and atoms and take these verses to mean some kind of Islamic astronomy or Islamic physics. Sadiq Jalal al-ʿAzm surveys some of this literature in his *Naqd al-Fikr al-Dīnī* (A Critique of Religious Thought), Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa, 1988, pp. 35–9.
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32 Qutb, *Maʿālim*, p. 88.
33 Ibid., pp. 88–92.
34 Ibid., p. 92. George Sale's translation.
35 S. Akhavi, 'The Dialectic in Contemporary Egyptian Social Thought: The Scripturalist and Modernist Discourses of Sayyid Qutb and Hasan Hanafi', in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies,* no. 29, 1997, p. 378.
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41 Shboul, 'Islamic Radicalism in the Arab World', in Saikal and Jukes (eds), *The Middle East*, p. 57.
42 Johns and Lahoud, op. cit., chapter 1.

43 As rendered by Anthony H. Johns, unpublished notes.
44 Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, 'Ihdār al-Siyāq fī Ta'wīlāt al-Khiṭāb al-Dīnī' (Religious Discourse and its Indifference to Contextual Analysis), *Majallat al-Fikr wa al-Fann al-Muʿāṣir* (Journal of Contemporary Thought and Art), no. 122, 1993, p. 98.
45 James Piscatori, 'The Turmoil Within', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, issue 3, 2002, p. 145. Piscatori is here responding to Gilles Kepel, who surveys the influence of Islamists in a number of Islamic countries and argues that Islamism is in decline. See Gilles Kepel (translated by Anthony F. Roberts), *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 366.
46 Wael Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunnī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 231.
47 Charles Kurzman, *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 6–7.
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50 Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, 'Ihdār al-Siyāq', pp. 87–115; Muhammad Shahrour, *al-Kitāb wa al-Qurʾan*, Cairo: Sīna li al-Nashr, 1992.
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54 Ibid., p. 115.
55 Ibid., p. 120.
56 Muhammad Shahrour, 'al–Uswa al-Ḥasana: al-Ṭāʿa li-Muhammad al-Insān am li-Muhammad al-Rasūl?' (The Excellent Model: Obedience to Muhammad the Human or to Muhammad the Messenger?), (by various authors) *al-ʿUnf al-Uṣūlī: Nuwwāb al-Arḍ wa al-Samāʾ* (Religious Violence: The [People's] Representatives on Earth and in Heaven), Beirut: Riyāḍ al-Rayyis Books Ltd, 1995, pp. 57–60.
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64 Ibid. See also the same theme running through Eickelman's 'Islam and Ethical Pluralism', in Sohail H. Hashmi (ed.), *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism and Conflict*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.
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67 Turki al-Hamad, *al-Siyāsa bayna al-Ḥalāl wa al-Ḥarām*, London: Dar al-Saqi, 3rd edition, 2003, p. 147.
68 A. Harb, *al-Mamnūʿ*, Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2000, p. 274.
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73 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (translated by Franz Rosenthal), Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958, vol. 3, chapter VI, section VI, pp. 30–1.
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78 F. Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

2 The Intellectuals and the tradition

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3 Waqidi, *Ḥiwār Falsafī: Qirā'a Naqdiyya fī al-Falsafa al-ʿArabiyya al-Muʿāṣira* (Philosophical Dialogue: A Critical Reading of Contemporary Arabic Philosophy), Al-Dār al-Bayḍā': Dār Tobqāl li al-Nashr, 1985, p. 105.
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5 Ibid., p. 51.
6 ʿAql al-ʿAwit, 'Risāla ilā Allah' (A Letter to God), *al-Nahār*, 11 March 2003, p. 1.
7 Hasan Nafaa, 'Arab Intellectuals and the American "Prince"', *al-Ahram Weekly*, 13–19 March, 2003 (Opinion).
8 Note that Rahman is here playing on the common ontological properties of the two terms, noting that in Arabic 'question' (*suʾāl*) and responsible (*masʾūl*) derive from the same root (*saʾal*). He is also using the term *masʾūl* to designate two different meanings: (1) 'responsible', in the sense of carrying responsibility, including that pertaining to the act of posing the question; (2) as the active participle of 'question', i.e. 'he who receives the question' as opposed to 'he who poses it'.
9 Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman, *al-Ḥaqq al-ʿArabī fī al-Ikhtilāf al-Falsafī* (The Arabic Right to Disagreement in Philosophy), Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2002, p. 14. A more literal rendition of the title would be The Arabic Right to Philosophical Disagreement, but I think the former rendition is more in line with the content of the book.
10 Ibid., p. 15.
11 Ibid., p. 16.
12 Ibid., pp. 16–17.
13 Ibid., p. 17.
14 Ibid., pp. 18–19.
15 Ibid., p. 65.
16 Ibid., p. 61.
17 Ibid., pp. 58–64.
18 Ibid., p. 65.
19 Ibid., p. 66.
20 Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman, *Tajdīd al-Manhaj fī Taqwīm al-Turāth* (Renewing the Method in Evaluating the Tradition), Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, n.d. (date post-1993), pp. 12–13.
21 Mentioned in Albert Hourani, 'Islamic History, Middle Eastern History, Modern History', in Malcolm H. Kerr (ed.), *Islamic Studies: A Tradition and its Problems*, Malibu CA: Undena Publications, 1980, p. 8.
22 Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabiri, *Al-Turāth wa al-Ḥadātha* (Tradition and Modernity), Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 1991, pp. 8–9.
23 Among others, Waqidi, *Ḥiwār Falsafī*; George Tarabishi, *Naẓariyyat al-ʿAql: Naqd Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī (1)* (A Theory of Intellect: A Critique of the *Critique of the Arabic Intellect*), 2nd edition, Dār al-Sāqī, 1999; *Ishkāliyyāt al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī: Naqd Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī (2)* (The

Problématique of the Arabic Intellect: A Critique of the *Critique of Arabic Intellect (2))*, Dār al-Sāqī, 1998; Taha ʿAbd al-Rahman, *Tajdīd al-Manhaj*.

24 Among others, Issa Boullata, *Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1990; D. Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2002, pp. 5–25; Hisham Sharabi, 'The Scholarly Point of View: Politics, Perspective, Paradigm', in Hisham Sharabi (ed.), *Theory, Politics and the Arab World: Critical Responses*, London: Routledge, 1990; Ghassan Finianos, *Islamistes, apologistes et libres penseurs*, Pessa: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2002; Abdou Filali-Ansary, *Réformer l'Islam?*, Paris: Édition la Découverte, 2003; Fred Dallmayr, 'Beyond Monologue: For a Comparative Political Theory', *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2004, p. 253 (pp. 249–57).

25 Jabiri, *Al-Turāth wa al-Ḥadātha*, p. 18.

26 Ibid., p. 19.

27 Jabiri's remark is consistent with the Arabic lexicon *Lisān al-ʿArab* that says that originally the 't' in *turāth* was 'wāw', i.e. from *wirāth*, 'inheritance', putting it in the same category as other terms that share the same root and mean material inheritance. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1999, vol. 15, p. 266.

28 Jabiri, *Al-Turāth wa al-Ḥadātha*, p. 24.

29 Ibid., pp. 21–3.

30 Ibid., p. 25.

31 Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabiri, *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī (1): Takwīn al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* (A Critique of Arabic Intellect (1): The Formation of Arabic Intellect), Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 1998, p. 43.

32 Ibid., pp. 135–6.

33 Ibid., chapter 10.

34 Ibid., chapter 11.

35 Ibid., pp. 347–8.

36 Jabiri, *Al-Turāth wa al-Ḥadātha*, p. 15.

37 Ibid., p. 26.

38 Ibid., pp. 26–8.

39 Ibid., pp. 29; Jabiri, *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī (1)*, pp. 11–14. See also Muhammad Waqidi's commentary on Jabiri's work in *Ḥiwār Falsafī*, pp. 105–6. Waqidi is here summarising Jabiri's views and presenting a critique as well.

40 Jabiri, *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī (1)*, p. 14.

41 Muhammed ʿAbid al-Jabri, *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth: Qirāʾāt Muʿāṣira fi Turāthina al-Falsafī* (Our Approach to the Tradition: A Contemporary Reading of our Philosophical Tradition), Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1993, p. 36.

42 Ibid., p. 56.

43 This line of argument echoes the Straussian approach to political philosophy, an approach that follows Leo Strauss's method. Essentially, this approach advances the view that philosophers wrote in esoteric styles for fear of persecution by the authorities. Jabiri refers to Muhsin Mahdi,

who was a student of Strauss and to some extent follows his method. I am not sure, however, the extent to which Jabiri is consciously following the Straussian approach. For more on this approach, see Leo Strauss, 'How Fārābī Read Plato's Laws', and 'On a Forgotten Kind of Writing', in *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies*, Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1959.

44 Jabiri, *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*, p. 68.
45 Ibid., p. 70.
46 Ibid., pp. 38–9.
47 Ibid., p. 39.
48 Ibid., pp. 40–3.
49 Ibid., pp. 213–14.
50 Ibid., p. 43.
51 Ibid., pp. 240–1.
52 Ibid., p. 242.
53 Ibid., p. 248.
54 Muhammed ʿAbid al-Jabri, *Arab-Islamic Philosophy: A Contemporary Critique* (translated by Aziz Abbassi), Austin TX: The Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1999, p. 129. Note that this translation is meant to be based (not entirely) on Jabiri's *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*, the work I refer to above. But for this specific point and the quotation that follows I am relying on the English translation.
55 Ibid., p. 124.
56 Robert Mantran, *L'Expansion Musulmane (VIIe–XI siècles)*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979, chapter IV; Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Maʾmūn*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 117–28
57 For a comprehensive and in-historical-context discussion of Fārābī and Ibn Rushd's 'ignorant' or imperfect regimes, including the democratic regime, see Patricia Crone, 'Al-Fārābī's Imperfect Constitutions', and Maroun Aouad, 'Does Averroes have a Philosophy of History?', both articles forthcoming in *Mélange de l'Université Saint Joseph*, 2005.
58 Ali Harb, *Mudākhalāt* (Interventions), Beirut: Dār al-Ḥadātha, 1985, p. 115.
59 Filali-Ansary, *Réformer l'Islam?*, p. 145.
60 Refer to Chapter 6 for an extension to this discussion.
61 Ali Harb, *Ḥiwārāt fī al-Fikr al-ʿArabī al-Muʿāṣir*, (Discussions in Contemporary Arabic Thought: The Arabic Cultural Project between Tradition and Modernity), Beirut: al Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya li al-Dirāsat wa al-Nashr, 2002, p. 293.
62 Ibid., p. 292.
63 Daryush Shayegan, *Cultural Schizophrenia: Islamic Societies Confronting the West* (translated from the French by John Howe), London: Saqi Books, 1992, p. 26.

3 Are Islamic politics Islamic or Islamist?

1 Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *al-Khiṭāb wa al-Taʾwīl* (Discourse and Interpretation), Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2000, p. 199.

2 George W. Bush's speech at the Islamic Center of Washington, following the attacks of 11 September 2001. Online. Available at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010917–11.html (accessed 13 November 2001); in a similar vein, see also Tony Blair, Wednesday 12 September 2001, *The Guardian*. Online. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/wtccrash/story/0,1300,550655,00.html (accessed 13 November 2001).
3 Abu al-Aʿla al-Mawdudi, *The Process of Islamic Revolution* (translator's name not available), Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd, 1980, p. 12.
4 Mawdudi, *Process of Islamic Revolution*, pp. 13–14. I have no reading knowledge of Urdu, so I have used the English translation of the text against the Arabic translation, and I am using the Arabic *Ḥākimiyyat Allah* based on the Arabic version.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., pp. 17–18.
7 Ibid., pp. 28–45.
8 Ibid., pp. 44–5.
9 Abu al-Aʿla al-Mawdudi, *Four Qur'anic Terms*, Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd, 2000, pp. 1–3.
10 Ibid., p. 3.
11 Ibid., p. 20.
12 Ibid., p. 78.
13 Mohamed Heikal, *Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat*, London: Corgi Books, 1984, p. 135.
14 On Qutb's influence, see Ahmad S. Moussalli, *Radical Islamic Fundamentalism: The Ideological and Political Discourse of Sayyid Qutb*, Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1992, pp. 14–15, and on Qutb being influenced by Mawdudi, see p. 36. Also, Qutb refers in his books to Mawdudi's writings, for example his *Maʿālim fī al-Ṭarīq* (Signposts), Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1970, p. 47.
15 Qutb, *Maʿālim*, p. 97.
16 Sayyid Qutb, *Dirāsāt Islāmiyya* (Islamic Studies), Beirut: Dār al-Sharq, 1995, p. 88.
17 Qutb, *Maʿālim*, p. 50.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., p. 51.
20 Ibid.
21 A. Johns, 'Let My People Go! Sayyid Qutb and the Vocation of Moses', *Islam & Christian Muslim Relations*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1990, p. 147 (pp. 143–70).
22 Qutb, *Maʿālim*, p. 99.
23 Ibid., pp. 100–1.
24 On the influence of Ibn Taymiyya on contemporary Islamists, such as Sayyid Qutb, see Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1985, pp. 101–2; David Sagiv, *Fundamentalism and Intellectuals in Egypt, 1973–1993*, London: Frank Cass, 1995, pp. 13–27.
25 Taqiyy al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya fī Iṣlāḥ al-Rāʿī wa al-Raʿiyya*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2000, pp. 105–24.
26 Ibid., p. 142.

27 Ibid., p. 139.
28 Ibid., p. 19. There is an excellent website that lists the works of Ibn Taymiyya in Arabic, some of which are translated into French and English: http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/it/default.htm, p. 140.
29 Q. 8: 39.
30 Online. Available at: 'Ubūdiyya', http://islamweb.net/pls/iweb/library.showChapList1?BkNo= 1602&KNo=13&StartNo=1&L=-1 (accessed 15 April 2004).
31 While there exist similarities between the ideas of Ibn Taymiyya and those of Mawdudi and Qutb, there are differences, too, even on the notion of *ʿubūdiyya*. Ibn Taymiyya, for instance, made (philosophical) distinctions between the oneness of Godhood (*tawḥīd al-ʾulūhiyya*) and the oneness of Lordship (*tawḥīd al-rubūbiyya*). See the Introduction and the translated text by Yahya Michot, 'La Servitude (ʿubūdiyya): de l'asservissement à l'adoration de Dieu'. Online. Available at: http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/it/works/ITA%20Texspi%2003.pdf (accessed 23 January 2004).
32 George F. Hourani, 'Islamic and non-Islamic Origins of Muʿtazilite Ethical Rationalism', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 7, 1976, p. 61.
33 See, for instance, Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* (translated by Andras and Ruth Hamori), Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981, pp. 4–5.
34 ʿAli ʿAbd al-Raziq, *al-Islām wa-Uṣūl al-Ḥukm* (Islam and the Principles of Political Authority), Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1988, book I, section 3, paragraph 17 (p. 146).
35 Raziq, *al-Islām*, book I, section 1, paragraphs 4–7 (pp. 132–6).
36 Raziq, *al-Islām*, book I, section 3, paragraph 7 (p. 139).
37 Raziq, *al-Islām*, book I, section 3, paragraph 15 (pp. 145–6).
38 Another factor contributing to the controversy resulting from Raziq's book was the political situation in Egypt, the birthplace of the author and the place of publication. For, in addition to presenting a strong critique of the system of Caliphate, the book also criticises the nature of kingship and cites contemporary examples of kingship corruption, see book I, section 3, paragraph 12 (p. 143). In Egypt on 6 March 1925, King Fouad dissolved the House of Representatives which had seen the opposition party, *Ḥizb al-Wafd*, winning the majority of seats in Parliament (on 24 February), hence acting against the Constitution of 1923. It is further believed that Britain at the time was supporting the push by the religious scholars (*ʿulamāʾ*) to nominate King Fouad as the Caliph, given his close ties with Britain. See ʿAmara's introduction, ibid., pp. 11–18.
39 ʿAmara introduces Raziq's book referred to in nn. 34–7.
40 Raziq is here relying on and quoting the work of Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, see ibid., p. 131. It is worth noting here that a number of prominent nineteenth-century Muslims made explicit calls to the Ottoman Sultan, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, for a separation between state and religious affairs. The Egyptian Mustafa Fadil Pasha (1830–75) warned that unless it limits itself to the spiritual realm, religion would 'bring [. . .] about its own demise as it undermines all else'. Cited in Said Bensaid Alaoui, 'Muslim Opposition Thinkers in the Nineteenth Century', in

Charles E. Butterworth and I. William Zartman (eds), *Between the State and Islam*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center (and Cambridge University Press), 2001, p. 94.

41 Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn al-Akhbār*, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub al-Maṣriyya, 1925, vol. 1, p. 3.

42 Māwardī's Arabic is difficult to translate. The literal meaning of 'worldly affairs' (*siyāsat al-dunyā*), for example, may also be rendered as 'worldly politics', but perhaps may not give the author's intended meaning. Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn Muhammed Ibn Ḥabīb al-Baṣrī al-Baghdād al Māwardī, *Kitāb al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d., p. 5.

43 See ibid., chapter 1. Commenting on Māwardī's theory of the Caliphate, H. A. R. Gibb notes that the jurists had to justify the Caliphate system and that Māwardī's work on the subject is not 'an objective exposition of an established theory, it is in reality an apologia or adaptation inspired and shaped by circumstances of his own time'; see his 'Some Considerations on the Sunni Theory of the Caliphate', *Archives d'Histoire du Droit Oriental*, vol. 3, 1939, pp. 401–10.

44 Hanna Mikhail, *Politics and Revelation: Māwardī and After*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 1995, p. xxxii.

45 Patricia Crone, 'A Statement by the Najdiyya Kharijites on the Dispensability of the Imamate', *Studia Islamica*, no. 88, 1998, pp. 55–76. Charles Pellat, 'L'imamat dans la doctrine de Gāḥiz', *Études sur l'histoire socio-culturelle de l'Islam (VIIe–XVe s.)*, London: Variorum Reprints, 1976, p. 38 (reprint from *Studia Islamica*, no. 15, Paris, 1961, pp. 23–52).

46 Wilfred Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 1–5.

47 Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, pp. 202–3; W. M. Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973, pp. 12–13.

48 Ibn Jaʿfar Muhammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk* (edited by Muhammad Abu al-Fadl Ibrahim), Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1979, vol. 5, pp. 48–53; Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, Cairo: Muʾassasat al-Ḥalabī wa-shurakāh li-alnashr, n.d., pp. 115–16.

49 See Abī al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ben Ismaʿīl al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn*, in H. Ritter (ed.), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1963, I, p. 191; Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*. On this doctrine and on who might have been the first to utter it, see the edited collection of primary sources and commentaries by Albert Nadir, *Madkhal ilā al-Firaq al-Islāmiyya al-Siyāsiyya wa al-Kalāmiyya*, Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986, pp. 14–15.

50 Watt, *Formative Period of Islamic Thought*, pp. 14–15. For an account of these events, see Patricia Crone and Fritz Zimmermann, *The Epistle of Sālim Ibn Dhakhwān*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 pp. 91–7.

51 Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, p. 193.

52 Ibid., p. 203.

53 Letter cited in Madelung, *Succession to Muhammad*, p. 205. For the primary source on this episode, see Ibn Kathīr, *fī al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1933, vol. 7, pp. 138–40.

54 Madelung, ibid., p. 203.
55 Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabiri, *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī (3): al-ʿAql al-Siyāsī al-ʿArabī*, Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2000, p. 234.
56 Ibn Kathīr, *fī al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, p. 146.
57 Jabiri, *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, p. 235.
58 Ibn Kathīr, *fī al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, p. 148. For other reported sayings by Muʿāwiya to do with political cunning, and secular and humanistic traits in Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn al-Akhbār*, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub al-Maṣriyya, 1925, vol. 1, pp. 9–10.
59 On the Abbasids, see M. A. Shaban, *The ʿAbbāsid Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 138–68; Hugh Kennedy, *The Early Abbasid Caliphate: A Political History*, London: Croom Helm, 1981, pp. 35–45.
60 Cited in Jaʿfar Murtada al-ʿAmili, *ʿAlī wa al-Khawārij* (ʿAlī and the Kharijites), Beirut: al-Markaz al-Islāmī li al-Dirāsāt, vol. 1, 2002, p. 15.
61 Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, vol. 1, p. 114.
62 I am grateful to Fritz Zimmermann for making available to me an unpublished paper by him on Al-Aṣamm. Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ḥabīb al-Baṣrī al-Baghdādī al-Māwardī, *Kitāb al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d., p. 5.
63 Patricia Crone and Fritz Zimmermann, *The Epistle of Sālim Ibn Dhakwān*, chapter 5 'The Khārijites'; see also Adonis, *Al-Thābit wa al-Mutaḥawwil: Baḥth fī al-Ittibāʿ wa al-Ibdāʿ ʿinda al-ʿArab (1) – al-Uṣūl*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1986, pp. 184–5.
64 Crone, 'A Statement by the Najdiyya Kharijites', pp. 55–76.
65 Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, vol. 1, p. 118.
66 Patricia Crone, 'Ninth-Century Muslim Anarchists', *Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies*, no. 167, 2000, p. 10 (pp. 3–28).
67 Ibid., pp. 9–12.
68 Ibid., p. 14.
69 Ibid., pp. 11–19. On similar views and reactions, see Charles Pellat, 'L'imamat dans la doctrine de Gāhiz', pp. 23–52; 'Djāhiz et les Khāridjites' (reprint from *Folia Orientalia*, 12, Varsovie, 1970), pp. 195–209; *Etudes sur l'histoire socio-culturelle de l'Islam* (*VIIe–XVe s.*), London: Variorum Reprints, 1976.
70 Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, p. 124.
71 See also the discussion by Majid Khadduri, *The Islamic Conception of Justice*, Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, pp. 3–5.
72 Aḥmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Uṣūl al-Sunna* (The Foundations of the Tradition) (edited by ʿAmru ʿAbd al-Munʿim Salim), Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 1993, p. 81.
73 Ibid., p. 80.
74 Zimmermann, 'Al-Aṣamm'.
75 John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 44.
76 John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 57.
77 Ibid., p. 50. For a discussion related to Wansbrough's thesis, see A. Rippin, 'The Qurʾan as Literature: Perils, Pitfalls and Prospects', *Bulletin*

(British Society of Middle Eastern Studies), vol. 10, issue 1, 1983, pp. 43–6; F. E. Peters, 'The Quest of the Historical Muhammad', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 23, issue 3, 1991, pp. 304–6. For a summary of the various theories regarding the text of the Qur'an, see Claude Gilliot, 'Muhammad, le Coran et les "contraintes de l'histoire"', in Stefan Wild, *The Qur'an as Text*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996.

78 Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu*, pp. 57–8.

79 Q. 2: 2.

80 Q. 3: 3; 3: 108; 4: 105.

81 Claude Gilliot, 'Un Verset Manquant du Coran ou Réputé Tel', in Marie-Thérèse Urvoy (ed.), *Patrimoines en Hommage au Père Jacques Jomier, o.p.*, Paris: Cerf, 2002.

82 Thomas Michel, 'Paul of Antioch and Ibn Taymiyya: The Modern Relevance of a Medieval Polemic', Lectures presented as *The D'Arcy Memorial Lectures*, Oxford, 27 January–2 March 2000, Lecture III (The Divine Word and Scripture in Islam and Christianity).

83 John Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'an*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp. 4–5.

84 See Thomas Michel, 'Paul of Antioch and Ibn Taymiyya'.

85 Q. 6: 114; 4: 15. The latter verse, in fact, suggests that the people of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*), i.e. the Jews and the Christians, hid some of God's revelations.

86 Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'an*, p. 118.

87 Cited in Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'an*, p. 119.

88 On ʿUthmān's reign, see Wilfred Madelung, '"Uthmān: the Vicegerent of God and the reign of ʿAbd Shams', *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

89 Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'an*, p. 19.

90 G. H. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance, and Authorship of Early Hadīth*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 72. See also the discussion by Wael Hallaq, 'On the Authoritativeness of Sunni Consensus', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 18, issue 4, 1986, pp. 428–30.

91 Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979; see p. 5 and the chapter 'Systematizing and Islamicizing'. For a different account, see M. Mustafa Al-Azami, *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Cambridge: The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and The Islamic Texts Society, 1996. See also Wael Hallaq who questions Schacht's argument about the existence of geographical schools in 'From Regional to Personal Schools of Law? A Reevaluation', *Islamic Law and Society*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2001.

92 Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, p. 40.

93 See Thomas Michel, 'Paul of Antioch and Ibn Taymiyya'. For a similar point on the oral culture dimension in Islam, see William A. Graham, 'Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 23, issue 3, Religion and History, 1993, p. 507.

94 D. F. Eickelman and J. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996, p. 5.

95 Ibid., p. 11.
96 Ibid., pp. 16–17. For a comprehensive review of the politics of Islam and related scholarly works on the subject, see Fred Halliday, 'The Politics of "Islam" – A Second Look', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 25, issue 3, 1995, pp. 399–417.
97 Outwardly secular traditions may indeed be imbued by religious considerations. See Dwight B. Billings and Shaunna L. Scott, 'Religion and Political Legitimation', *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 20, 1994, p. 178.
98 John Hunwick, 'Secular Power and Religious Authority in Muslim Society: The Case of Songhay', *Journal of African History*, vol. 37, 1996, p. 176.
99 Abdul Hamid el-Zein, 'Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 6, 1977, p. 251.
100 Ibid., p. 252.
101 Muhammad ʿAmara, in ʿAli ʿAbd al-Raziq, *al-Islām wa-Uṣūl al-Ḥukm*, Beirut: al-Muʾassassa al-ʿArabiyya li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 1988, p. 5.

4 Allegory and orthodoxies

1 Cited in Ibn Jaʿfar Muhammad bin Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk* (edited by Muhammad Abu al-Fadl Ibrahim), Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1979, vol. 5, p. 66.
2 Suggested rendering by Anthony H. Johns (unpublished notes).
3 It revolves around the theme of attaining philosophical and religious knowledge through the tale of an encounter between a man having grown up alone on an island and another man, learned in religion, and who grew up in a community.
4 Jon Whitman, Earl Miner, Kang-i Sun Chang and Julie S. Meisami, 'Allegory', in Alex Preminger and T. V. Brogan (eds), *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 31.
5 Solomon Simonson, 'The Idea of Interpretation in Hebrew Thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 8, issue 4, 1947, p. 472. See also Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mythe et religion en Grèce ancienne*, Paris: Édition du Seuil, 1990, pp. 35–40; for other examples of allegorical interpretations, see Abd al-Rahman Badawi, *Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyīn*, Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm li al-Malāyīn, 1997, pp. 754–9.
6 He was possibly from an Arabised Iranian family; see G. Lecomte, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 3, Leiden: E. J. Brill, pp. 844–7.
7 For a detailed discussion of Ibn Qutayba's literary approach, see James Montgomery, 'Of Models and Amanuenses: The Remarks on the Qaṣīda in Ibn Qutayba's Kitāb al-Shiʿr wa al-Shuʿarāʾ". I am grateful to James Montgomery for giving me a copy of his paper before its publication.
8 Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwīl Mushkil al-Qurʾan* (edited by al-Sayyid Ahmad Saqr), Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1973, pp. 20–1.
9 J. Zaydan, *Tārikh Ādāb al-Lughāt al-ʿArabiyya* (edited by Shawqi Dayf), Cairo: Dār al-Hilāl, 1981, vol. 3, p. 17.
10 Anthony H. Johns, 'The Qurʾanic Presentation of the Joseph Story: Naturalistic or Formulaic Language?', in G. R. Hawting and Abdul-

Kader A. Shareef (eds), *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 39–40.

11 Anthony H. Johns, 'Jonah in the Qur'an: An Essay on Thematic Counterpoint', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, vol. 5, issue 11, 2003, p. 69 (pp. 48–71). The Qur'anic verses are as rendered by Johns. Johns draws a comparison between these verses and Martin Buber's views on the infinite adaptation of the Torah: 'To you, God is one who revealed Himself once, and no more; but to us He speaks out of the burning thornbush of the present.'

12 Yusuf Rahman notes that *i'jāz al-Qur'an* emerged in the tenth century and developed further in the eleventh century; see his 'Ellipsis in the Qur'an: A Study of Ibn Qutayba's Ta'wīl Mushkil al-Qur'an', in Issa Boullata (ed.), *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur'an*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000, p. 279 (pp. 277–91).

13 R. MacDonough Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes: The Teaching of the Basrian School of the Mu'tazila in the Classical Period*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1978, p. 9.

14 Majd al-Dīn Muhammad bin Ya'qūb al-Fayrūzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, 2nd edition, 1952, vols 1–2, Cairo: Muṣtafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, p. 7.

15 For references in the Qur'an, see Q. 48: 15; 16: 103. The referencing of the Qur'an is aided by the meticulously compiled index by Muhammad Fouad 'Abd al-Baqi, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li-Alfāẓ al-Qur'an al-Karīm*, Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, n. d.

16 Zaydan, *Tārīkh Ādāb al-Lughāt al-'Arabiyya*, p. 11.

17 Cited in ibid., p. 15.

18 Muhammad 'Abd al-Qadir Hanadi, *Ẓāhirat al-Ta'wīl fī I'rāb al-Qur'an al-Karīm*, Mecca: Maktabat al-Ṭālib al-Jāmi'ī, 1988, p. 14. On the different usages and purposes of *ta'wīl* in the Arabic language, see the introductory pages in the same source, pp. 11–13.

19 Based on a rendition by Anthony H. Johns (unpublished notes).

20 Noted in Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 'Text and Textuality: Q. 3: 7 as a Point of Intersection', in Issa Boullata (ed.), *Literary Structures of Religious Meaning in the Qur'an*, p. 64 (pp. 56–76). This is in reference to al-Ṭabarsī quoting the jurist 'Alī Ibn Muhammad al-Māwardī.

21 See Abī al-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa-Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn*, in H. Ritter (ed.), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1963, pp. 222–4.

22 Ibn Qutayba, *Ta'wīl Mushkil al-Qur'an*, p. 86.

23 As rendered by Anthony H. Johns (unpublished notes).

24 Ibn Qutayba, *Ta'wīl Mushkil al-Qur'an*, p. 72.

25 As rendered by Anthony H. Johns, Chapter 'The Outward and the Inward in the Qur'an and Tradition', paragraph 27. Unpublished manuscript.

26 Ibid.

27 As cited and rendered in Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Qur'anic Hermeneutics of the Sufī Sahl At-Tustarī (d. 283/896)*, Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1980, p. 139. Transliteration of Arabic is consistent with my own and not as followed by Böwering. I am grateful to Anthony H. Johns for drawing this to my attention.

28 Cited in ibid., p. 139.
29 Ibn ʿArabī, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾan al-Karīm*, Beirut: Dār al-Yaqẓa al-ʿArabiyya, 1968, vol. 1, pp. 4–5.
30 For an account of pre-Muʿtazilite Islamic theology, see Joseph Van Ess, 'The Beginnings of Islamic Theology' (the article as well as the discussion), in J. E. Murdoch and E. D. Sylla (eds), *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning*, Boston MA: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1975, pp. 88–90.
31 Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, vol. 1, Cairo: Muʾassasat al-Ḥalabī wa shurakāh li al-nashr, n. d., pp. 139–46.
32 Albert Nadir, *Madkhal ilā al-Firaq al-Islāmiyya al-Siyāsiyya wa al-Kalāmiyya*, Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986, pp. 70–1. For further background readings, see Reynold E. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953, pp. 219–24. See also Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2nd edition, Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2002, pp. 85–99.
33 Al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-Niḥal*, pp. 43–5. It was followed by the doctrines of divine justice (*ʿadl*), the promise and the threat- (*al-waʿd wa al-waʿīd*, the intermediate position (*al-manzila bayna al-manzilatayn*) and commanding right and forbidding wrong (*al-ʾamr bi al-maʿrūf wa al-nahy ʿan al-munkar*).
34 Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Maʾmūn*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 117–28. See also the review of this book by A. H. Johns, 'Classical Arabic Biography: The Heirs of the Prophets in the Age of al-Maʾmūn', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2001, p. 322–4.
35 Cooperson, ibid., p. 110.
36 Al-Ashʿarī, *al-ʾIbāna ʿan Uṣūl al-Diyāna*, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1998, pp. 15–16.
37 Ibid., p. 9.
38 On the influence of Greek thought on Islamic theology, see Michel Allard, *Le Problème des Attributs Divins dans la Doctrine d'al-Asʾari et de ses Premiers Grands Disciples*, Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965, pp. 156–9.
39 A. N. Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm* (edited and introduced by ʿUthman Amin), al-Qāhira: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, n.d., p. 111.
40 On Ghazālī's commitment to Ashʿarism, see Ahmad Dallal's review article, 'Ghazālī and the Perils of Interpretation', *Journal of American Oriental Society*, vol. 122, no. 4, Oct.–Dec. 2002, pp. 773–87.
41 See the discussion in Iysa A. Bello, *The Medieval Islamic Controversy between Philosophy and Orthodoxy: Ijmāʿ and Taʾwīl in the Conflict between al-Ghazālī and Ibn Rushd*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989, 'Introduction'.
42 Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Muṣtafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1939, vol. 1, p. 20. On that point, see H. Laoust, *La Politique de Gazālī*, Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1970, p. 202, and Richard M. Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System: Al-Ghazālī & Avicenna*, Heidelberg: Carl Winter- Universitätsverlag, 1992, p. 29. See also what Ghazālī has to say on this matter in *Fayṣal al-Tafriqa bayna al-Islām wa al-Zandaqa* (*Fayṣal*), in *Majmūʿat Rasāʾil al-Imām al-Ghazālī*, Beirut:

Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d., p. 85. His hierarchical attitude is also made explicit with reference to the Ismaʿīlī sect, an off-shoot of Shīʿism, when he writes that 'the chief danger of the heresy (Ismaʿilism) lay in its attraction for the labouring and artisan classes'; cited in Leila Al-Imad, 'Women and Religion in the Fatimid Caliphate: The Case of al-Sayyidah al-Hurrah, Queen of Yemen', in Michael M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (eds), *Intellectual Studies on Islam*, Salt Lake City UT: University of Utah Press, 1990, p. 138.

43 Ghazālī, in Sulaiman Dunya (ed.), *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* (*TF*), Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1955, p. 72. On Ghazālī's acceptance of some of the ancient philosophers' contributions, see also Ghazālī, *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, Beirut: Commission Libanaise pour la Traduction des Chefs-D'oeuvres, 1969, pp. 20–7.

44 *TF*, p. 72.

45 Ibid., p. 73.

46 Ibid.

47 George Hourani, 'Introduction', *Averroes: On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, London: Messrs Luzac & Co., 1961, p. 3. See also George F. Hourani, 'The Dialogue between al-Ghazālī and the Philosophers on the Origin of the World', *Muslim World*, vol. 48, no. 3, part I, pp. 183–91, and no. 4, part II, pp. 308–14, 1958.

48 Tony Street, *Angels in Medieval Islamic Theology: A Study in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, PhD thesis, Australian National University, Canberra, 1988, pp. 18–21.

49 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1980, vol. 26, p. 229. I am grateful to A. H. Johns and Tony Street for bringing this reference in Rāzi's work to my attention.

50 As cited and rendered in Bello, *Medieval Islamic Controversy*, p. 53. Quotation from *al-Iqtiṣād fī al-Iʿtiqād*.

51 Richard Frank, 'Moral Obligation in Classical Muslim Theology', *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 11, 1983, pp. 207–8. The Muʿtazilites, on the other hand, allow a role for reason in the formulation of ethical precepts, and consider predicates (good or bad) to be determined by characteristics of actions. See same source, p. 206. See also Richard Frank, 'On the Autonomy of Human Agent in the Teaching of ʿAbd Al-Gabbar', *Le Museon*, vol. 95, 1982, pp. 323–55.

52 *Fayṣal*, pp. 79, 81.

53 Ibid., pp. 79, 81.

54 Ibid., p. 81.

55 Ibid., pp. 82–3.

56 Ibid., p. 83.

57 Ibid., pp. 84–5.

58 Ibid., p. 85.

59 Ibid., pp. 83–8.

60 Ibid., pp. 88–90.

61 Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'an wa-Dururuh*, Beirut: Dār al-āfāq al-Jadīda, al-Āfāq, 1983, p. 37.

62 Jean Michot, *La Destinée de l'Homme selon Avicenne*, Louvain: Aedibus Peters, 1986, p. 30.

63 Ibid., p. 33.

64 For a brief history of these empires, see Robert Irwin, 'The Emergence of the Islamic World System 1000–1500', in Francis Robinson (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 36–7.
65 The references to *Faṣl* are based on the Arabic text in Marc Geoffroy (translator), *Averroès: Le Livre du Discours Décisif*, Paris: Flammarion, 1996, paragraph 24, p. 122. In my rendering of Arabic terms and quotations, I benefited from George Hourani's and Charles Butterworth's English translations, as well as Geoffroy's French translation. For a comprehensive background to *Faṣl*, see George Hourani, 'Introduction', *Averroes: On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, London: Messrs Luzac & Co., 1961, especially pp. 6–18. See also the introduction by Alain de Libera, in Geoffroy, *Averroès.*
66 This term should be understood in light of Greek terms such as, τεχνη (art/craft) and ποιεω (make/produce), *Faṣl*, paragraph 2.
67 *Faṣl*, paragraph 2.
68 *Faṣl*, paragraph 3.
69 *Faṣl*, paragraphs 3–5.
70 *Faṣl*, paragraph 5.
71 See Q. 4: 174, 12: 24, 23: 117, 2: 111, 21: 24, 27: 64, 28: 75 and 28: 32.
72 On the relevance of these divisions for Ibn Rushd, see Charles E. Butterworth, 'Averroes: Politics and Opinion', *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 66, issue 3, 1972, pp. 894–901.
73 *Faṣl*, paragraph 20.
74 *Faṣl*, paragraph 18.
75 *Faṣl*, as translated by Hourani, p. 50.
76 *Faṣl*, paragraph 19.
77 *Faṣl*, paragraphs 9, 14.
78 *Faṣl*, paragraph 22.
79 *Faṣl*, paragraph 27, and see *Fayṣal*, p. 85.
80 See, on this point, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *al-Khiṭāb wa al-Taʾwīl*, Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2000, p. 55.
81 Sayyid Qutb, *al-Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qurʾan*, Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1993, 14th edition, p. 25.
82 Ibid., p. 36.
83 Ibid., p. 5.
84 Sayyid Qutb, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurʾan*, Beirut: Dār al-Sharq, 1982, vol. 1, p. 348.
85 Ibid., p. 349.
86 Ibid., p. 351.
87 Ibid., p. 352.
88 Ibid., pp. 353, 369.
89 Ibid., p. 369.
90 Ibid., p. 370.
91 For further biographical details, see Navid Kermani, 'From Revelation to Interpretation: Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd and the Literary Study of the Qurʾan', in Suha Taji-Farouki (ed.), *Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qurʾan*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 169–71 (pp. 169–92).
92 Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Ishkāliyyāt al-Qirāʾa wa-Āliyyāt al-Taʾwīl,* Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1999, p. 228.

93 Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Mafhūm al-Naṣṣ: Dirāsa fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾan*, Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Maṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li al-Kitāb, 1993, p. 11.
94 Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Naqd al-Khiṭāb al-Dīnī,* Cairo: Sīnā li al-Nashr, 1994, p. 111.
95 Ibid., p. 119.
96 Ibid., p. 119.
97 Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, 'Ihdār al-Siyāq fī taʾwīlāt al-Khiṭāb al-Dīnī', *al-Qāhira*, no. 122, 1993, p. 87.
98 Ibid., p. 89. See also Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *al-Khiṭāb wa al-Taʾwīl*, Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2000, pp. 9–12.
99 Ibid.
100 Abu Zayd, 'Ihdār al-Siyāq fī taʾwīlāt al-Khiṭāb al-Dīnī', p. 87.
101 Abu Zayd , *Ishkāliyyāt al-Qirāʾa wa-Āliyyāt al-Taʾwīl,* pp. 13–49.
102 Ibid., p. 87.

5 Fārābī: on religion and philosophy

1 Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal), New York: Pantheon Books, 1958, vol. 3, chapter vi, section 30, p. 246.
2 E. I. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958, pp. 123–4.
3 F. M. Najjar, 'Fārābī's Political Philosophy and Shīʿism', *Studia Islamica*, vol. 14, 1961, p. 63; Richard Walzer, *Al-Fārābī on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's Mabādiʾ ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*. A revised text with introduction, translation and commentary by Richard Walzer, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985, especially p. 5. In fact, Walzer associates a much stronger connection between Fārābī and Shīʿism than that of Najjar.
4 A. N. Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʿ al-ʿUlūm* (edited and introduced by Uthman Amīn), al-Qāhira: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, n.d., p. 40.
5 Miriam Galston, *Politics and Excellence: The Political Philosophy of AlFārābī*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 14.
6 Hans Daiber, 'The Ruler as Philosopher: A New Interpretation of al-Fārābī's View', Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, AFD. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel 49 – No. 4, Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1986.
7 Muhsin Mahdi, *AlFārābī and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy*, Chicago IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 125.
8 For a comprehensive view of the meaning of *kalām* and the problems associated with translating the term, see Joseph Van Ess, 'The Beginnings of Islamic Theology', in J. E. Murdoch and E. D. Sylla (eds), *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning*, Boston MA: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1975 (the article as well as the discussion), pp. 87–111.
9 See Richard Frank, 'The Science of Kalām', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, vol. 2, 1992, pp. 7–37, footnote 25. On this point, see also R. M. Frank, 'Currents and Countercurrents', in P. G. Riddell and T. Street (eds), *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society, A Festschrift in Honour of Anthony H. Johns*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997, pp. 114–15.

10 D. Gimaret, *La Doctrine d'al-Ashʿari*, Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1990, pp. 211–13.
11 See, for example, Abī al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Ben Ismaʿīl al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islamiyyīn wa-Ikhtilāf al-Muṣallīn*, H. Ritter (ed.), Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1963, pp. 165–8.
12 Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, p. x.
13 Michel Allard, *Le Problème des Attributs Divins dans la Doctrine d'al-Ashʿari et de ses Premiers Grands Disciples*, Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965, pp. 156–9; G. Vajda, *Introduction à la Pensée Juive du Moyen Age*, Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1947, p. 146. For a critical reading of the rationalism of *kalām*, see Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism*.
14 A. N. al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Jamʿ bayna Raʾyay al-Ḥakīmayn* (edited by A. Nadir), Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986, p. 80 (1). See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (translated by H. G. Apostle), Grinnell IA: The Peripatetic Press, 1979, Book Γ (1003a22–1003a32). For published translations of many of Fārābī's political writings, see Charles Butterworth, *Alfarabi, the Political Writings: Selected Aphorisms and other Texts*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.
15 Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Jamʿ*, p. 80 (2).
16 As put by Gerhard Endress, 'The Circle of al-Kindī: Early Arabic Translations from the Greek and the Rise of Islamic Philosophy', in Gerhard Endress and Remke Kruk (eds), *The Ancient Tradition in Christian and Islamic Hellenism*, Leiden: Research School CNWS, 1997, p. 54. On this point, see also Charles Butterworth, 'Al-Kindī and Islamic Political Philosophy', in Charles E. Butterworth (ed.), *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 29–30. See Muhammad ʿAbd al-Hādī Abū Ridah, *Rasāʾil al-Kindī al-Falsafiyya*, Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1950–3, pp. 372–7. In his *Kitāb al-Jamʿ*, Fārābī too draws on *Theology* and attributes it to Aristotle when discussing the subject regarding the eternity or generation of the world (chapter 11). His concern, however, is to reconcile the teachings of Aristotle and Plato and not Islamic teachings with Greek thought. It is worth noting that Therese-Anne Druart suggests that Fārābī, who refers four times to Plotinus' *Theology* in his *Harmony*, 'was aware of discrepancies between [*The Theology*] and *The Metaphysics* that could be eventually explained by a difference in authorship', in 'Al-Fārābī, Emanation, and Metaphysics', in Parviz Morewedge (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought*, Albany NY: State University of New York, 1992, p. 134.
17 Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Jamʿ*, p. 80 (1). Joep Lameer proposes that this work is falsely attributed to Fārābī – see Joep Lameer, *Al-Fārābī and Aristotelian Syllogistics: Greek Theory and Islamic Practice*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994, pp. 30–3.
18 A. N. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* (edited by A. Nādir), Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1996, p. 148; A. N. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya* (edited by F. M. Najjar), Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986, p. 86.

19 Walzer, *Al-Fārābī on the Perfect State*, p. 5; see also his commentary notes on pp. 436, 441–2.
20 A. N. al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, n.d., p. 103.
21 Ibid., emphasis added. See A. N Fārābī, *Fuṣūl Muntazaʿa* (edited by Fauzi Najjar), Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1993; note the usage of the term *malik* (king) in various paragraphs 4, 30, 32, 31.
22 A. N. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Milla*, in Paragraphs 2, 3 in M. Mahdi (ed.), *Kitāb al-Milla wa-Nuṣūs Ukhrā*, Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986. On this point, see also M. Mahdi, 'Al-Fārābī's Imperfect State', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 110, issue 4, 1990, p. 708.
23 Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, p. 84. Also in *Kitāb Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, chapter 33, p. 146.
24 Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, pp. 84–5.
25 Ibid., p. 85.
26 Ibid., p. 85. See also A. N. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Taḥṣīl as-Saʿāda* (edited by Jaʿfar Yasin), Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1981, p. 79 (46).
27 Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, p. 86.
28 Ibid., p. 86.
29 Fārābī, *Kitāb Taḥṣīl al-Saʿāda*, p. 82 (50) and, especially, p. 90 (56).
30 Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, pp. 63–72.
31 Ibid., p. 72.
32 A. N. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* (Book of Letters) (edited by M. Mahdi), Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1970, p. 131 (108).
33 As put by Fritz Zimmermann, *Al-Fārābī's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's* De Interpretatione, London: Oxford University Press, 1981, p. cxv.
34 Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, p. 73.
35 Ibid., p. 73.
36 Ibid., p. 73. Note that *ẓann*, 'opinion' (singular of *ẓunūn*) should be understood in the same way *doxa* is understood as opposed to *episteme*. For an explanation of the usage of the term *ẓann*, see D. L. Black, *Logic and Aristotle's* Rhetoric *and* Poetics *in Medieval Arabic Philosophy*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990, footnote 25 on pp. 59–60.
37 Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, p. 148 (138).
38 A. N. Al-Fārābī, 'Kitāb al-Khaṭāba', in J. Langhade and M. Grignaschi (eds), 'Introduction', *Al-Fārābī: Deux ouvrages inédits sur la Rhétorique*, Beirut: Dar El-Mashriq, 1971, p. 31 (3–5). For a comprehensive discussion of Fārābī's *Kitāb al-Khaṭāba*, and comparison with Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, see Maroun Aouad, 'Les Fondements de la *Rhétorique* D'Aristote Reconsidérées par Fārābī, ou le Concept de Vue Immédiat et Commun', *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy*, vol. 2, 1992, pp. 133–80.
39 A. N. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Shiʿr* (Book of Poetry/Poetic Discourse) (edited by Muhsin Mahdi), *Shiʿr*, no. 12, vol. 3, Autumn, 1959, p. 92.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., p. 93.
42 Ibid., pp. 94–5. See also his negative attitude towards poetic discourse in A. N. Al-Fārābī, *Falsafat Aflaṭūn* (edited by Franz Rosenthal and Richard Walzer), London, 1943, p. 7, III (8).
43 Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, pp. 53–4. See also Zimmermann, *Al-Fārābī's Commentary and Short Treatise*, p. cxv.

44 Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, p. 103.
45 For the Alexandrian influence of this text, see Dimitri Gutas, 'Paul the Persian on the Classification of the Parts of Aristotle's Philosophy: A Milestone between Alexandria and Baghdād', in D. Gutas, *Greek Philosophers in the Greek Tradition*, Sydney: Ashgate Variorum, 2000, chapter IX.
46 Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, p. 43.
47 Fārābī, *Fuṣūl Muntazaʿa*, p. 51, paragraph 35.
48 Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ*, p. 110.
49 Ibid., p. 107.
50 Ibid., pp. 107–8.
51 Ibid., pp. 7–8.
52 A. N. Al-Fārābī, *Risāla fi al-ʿAql* (edited by Maurice Bouyges), Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1938, p. 4.
53 Fārābī, *Fuṣūl Muntazaʿa*, pp. 41–3 (25–6); *Kitāb Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, chapter 26, pp. 118–19; *Kitāb al-Milla* (14c).
54 Muhsin Mahdi, *AlFārābī's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962, p. 65.
55 Fritz Zimmermann has put this argument to me in a conversation, and I find it very persuasive. I have his permission to quote him here. I should also note that Emma Ghannagé has independently come to a similar conclusion. Both Ghannagé and I attended a workshop at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton, in June 2003, and it was both a pleasure and a coincidence that the same argument was made. Hans Daiber, on the other hand, identifies logic with religion, which leads him to conclude that philosophy and religion are interdependent. For a detailed analysis of the *Book of Letters*, see Ghannagé's article 'Y-a-t-il une pensée politique dans le *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf* d'al-Fārābī?', *Mélange de l'Université Saint Joseph*, forthcoming 2005.
56 See also on this point Muhsin Mahdi's introduction in *AlFārābī's Book of Letters*, p. 45.
57 Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, p. 53. On how the importance of logic for philosophy was viewed, see Zimmermann, *Al-Fārābī's Commentary and Short Treatise*, pp. xxi–xxiv.
58 Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ*, p. 59.
59 D. S. Margoliouth, 'The Discussion Between Abu Bishr Matta and Abu Saʿid al-Sirafi on the Merits of Logic and Grammar', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1905, pp. 79–129, see, especially, p. 113.
60 On the way the philosophers separated politics from jurisprudence, see Fauzi M. Najjar, '*Siyasa* in Islamic Political Philosophy', in Michael Marmura (ed.), *Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George Hourani*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1984, p. 102.
61 Fārābī, *Fuṣūl Muntazaʿa*, p. 92 (88).
62 Ibid., p. 92 (91).
63 *Kitāb Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, chapter 26, pp. 117–18; and Fārābī, *al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, pp. 69–70.
64 *Kitāb Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, chapter 26, p. 118; and Fārābī, *al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, p. 69.
65 *Kitāb al-Milla* (5).
66 *Kitāb al-Milla* (14a).

67 *Kitāb al-Milla* (6).
68 *Kitāb Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, chapter 36, pp. 160–1.
69 Fārābī, *Fuṣūl Muntazaʿa*, p. 92 (89).
70 As translated by Muhsin Mahdi, 'AlFārābī Against Philoponus', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Oct. 1967, vol. 26, no. 4, p. 257.
71 Ibid., pp. 235–6.
72 On Fārābī having access to Aristotle's *Politics*, see Shlomo Pines, 'Aristotle's *Politics* in Arabic Philosophy', *Studies in Arabic Versions of Greek Texts and in Mediaeval Science*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986, pp. 154–60.
73 Rémi Brague, 'Note sur la Traduction Arabe de la *Politique*, Derechef, Qu'elle n'existe pas', in Pierre Aubenque (ed.), *Aristote* Politique*: Etudes sur la* Politique *d'Aristote*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993, pp. 423–33.
74 Aristotle, *Politics* (translated by H. G. Apostle and L. P. Gerson), Grinnell IA: Peripatetic Press, *c.* 1986, 1252b28–33. It should be noted here that Fārābī does not follow the same divisions with regard to the nature and sizes of social groupings. Aristotle, for example, has the following associations or social groupings: the city made up of several villages, a village made up of several households, and the household as the first association (1252b12–33).
75 Robert C. Barlett, 'Aristotle's Science of the Best Regime', *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 88, issue 1, March 1994, p. 144. See also *Iliad* 13.450, and Plato's *Apology* 41a (as mentioned in Barlett's article).
76 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1272a33–6. The Overseers are elected from certain families, while the Elders are chosen from amongst those who had served as Overseers.
77 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1272a11–13.
78 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1272b3–11. Not many translations of Aritotle's *Politics* have 'it is not political'. But the Greek text has και ου πολιτικη αλλα δυαστευτικη – see Alois Dreizehnter, *Aristotele's Politik*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1970.
79 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1272b3–11.
80 Roy P. Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society*, Guildford ME: Princeton University Press, 1980 pp. 30–1. The discussion here is that Abū Sulaimān, an influential thinker and a contemporary of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī, presents a somewhat indifferent position towards belonging to the religion of Islam. He notes that he had no choice in being born into the religion of Islam and found 'its ways to be like the ways of other religions'. I am thankful to James Montgomery for drawing my attention to this work and its possible relevance to Fārābī's religiosity.
81 Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, p. 132 (110).
82 Dimitri Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2002, vol. 29, no. 1, p. 23.
83 A. N. Al-Fārābī, *Kitāb Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* (edited by A. Nadir), Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1996, chapter 24, p. 108.
84 A. N. Al-Fārābī, *Risāla fi al-ʿAql* (On Intellect), (Texte Arabe Integral en partie inédit, Établi par Maurice Bouyges, S. J.), Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1938, pp. 12–13.

85 *Kitāb Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, chapter 24, p. 111.
86 On Aristotle's notion of the Prime Mover, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (translated by H. G. Apostle), Grinnell IA: The Peripatetic Press, 1979, Book Λ, 1072a19–1072b31. For an extensive treatment of the role of the Active Intellect and its position relative to the other intellects, see Fārābī's *Risāla fi al-ʿAql*, and on this particular point, see pp. 24–5.
87 *Kitāb Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, chapter 24, p. 112. It is very likely that Fārābī based his terminology (jargon) and his ranking of the different intellects on the commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodesias on Aristotle's works. See, for example, Alexander of Aphrodesias, 'On Intellect', in *Commentaires sur Aristote Perdus en Grec et autres Epītres* (edited by A. Badawi), Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986, pp. 31–42 and pp. 42–3.
88 *Kitāb Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, chapter 24, p. 112.
89 Ibid., chapter 25, p. 115.
90 Ibid., chapter 27, pp. 123–5.
91 As cited in Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy', p. 24.
92 *Kitāb Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, chapter 29, p. 133.
93 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Risālat Dhamm Ladhdhāt al-Dunya*, edited by Ahmad Shahade (forthcoming). I am grateful for Ahmad Shahade for giving me a copy of this manuscript before publication.
94 Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, p. 155 (149). Fārābī emphasises that in both cases it is not a matter of *milla* versus philosophy and *vice versa*. Rather it is the people of the *milla* versus the people of philosophy and *vice versa*, who, for a misunderstanding on the part of the people of the *milla*, develop this situation of hostility.
95 On this, see ibid., p. 152 (144). See also the discussion on how the true philosopher is 'he' who can make use of the theoretical virtues in practical matters in Fārābī, *Kitāb Taḥṣīl al-Saʿāda*, pp. 89–97 (55–64).
96 Daiber, 'The Ruler as Philosopher', p. 14.
97 For a detailed study of Fārābī's imperfect regimes, see Patricia Crone 'Al-Fārābī's Imperfect Constitutions', forthcoming in *Mélange de l'Université Saint Joseph*.

6 On Ibn Rushd's liberalism

1 Ibrahim Aʿrab, *Al-Islām al-Siyāsī wa al-Ḥadātha* (Political Islam and Modernity), Beirut: Afrīqyā al-Sharq, 2000, pp. 222–3. Note that in this quotation, Aʿrab is quoting from Ibn Rushd's *Faṣl al-Maqāl*.
2 Muhammed ʿAbid al-Jabiri, *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth: Qirāʾat Muʿāṣira fi Turāthinā al-Falsafī*, Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabi, 1993, p. 52. I am not sure if Jabiri means *al-ẓallāmiyya*, tyrannical, as I have rendered it, or *al-ẓalāmiyya*, in which case it would be 'dark'. See also Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, 'al-Taʿaddudiyya wa-Dalālat al-Ikhtilāf', in Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *al-Khiṭāb wa al-Taʾwīl*, Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2000.
3 Jabiri, *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*.
4 George Tarabishi has conveniently enumerated many of Jabiri's generalised and unwarranted criticisms of Ibn Sīnā in a study he wrote as a

critique of Jabiri's work; see G. Tarabishi, *Waḥdat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī al-Islāmī*, London: Dār al-Sāqī, 2002, pp. 11–13. A similar divide exists among some Orientalists on who is the most important philosopher in the Islamic philosophical tradition, but with an opposite order, i.e. lauding the philosophical current represented by Ibn Sīnā while dismissing that represented by Fārābī and Ibn Rushd. On the championing of Eastern philosophy, see Dimitri Gutas, 'The Study of Arabic Philosophy in the Twentieth Century: An Essay on the Historiography of Arabic Philosophy', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2002, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 5–25. See also his 'The Heritage of Avicenna: The Golden Age of Arabic Philosophy, 100-ca. 1350', in Jules Janssens and Daniel De Smet (eds), *Avicenna and His Heritage: Acts of the International Colloquium, Leuven-Louvain-La-Neuve September 8–September 11, 1999*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002.

5 Cited in G. Finianos, *Islamistes, apologistes et libres penseurs*, Pessac: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2002, p. 320.

6 Edward Grant, *The Foundation of Modern Science in the Middle Ages: Their Religious, Intellectual and Institutional Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 71–2.

7 Joseph Sarachek, *Faith and Reason: The Conflict over the Rationalism of Maimonides*, New York: Hermon Press, 1970, pp. 3–6.

8 Paul A. Cantor, 'The Uncanonical Dante: The Divine Comedy and Islamic Philosophy', *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1996, pp. 144–5.

9 As translated in the 'Introduction', G. Hourani, *Averroes: On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, London: Messrs Luzac & Co., 1961, p. 12.

10 Ibid. Hourani's Introduction is very comprehensive on Ibn Rushd's life. See also Roger Arnaldez, *Averroes: A Rationalist in Islam*, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000, pp. 1–15. There is also a useful collection of Arabic extracts from different biographies of Ibn Rushd appended to Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'Averroisme*, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1948, vol. 3, pp. 229–352.

11 Muhammad ʿAbid al-Jabiri, *Al-Turāth wa al-Ḥadātha*, Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 1991, pp. 65–6.

12 Ernest Renan, 'Les Peuples Sémitiques', in E. Renan, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1948, vol. 2, p. 326 (pp. 317–35).

13 Ibid., p. 332.

14 Ernest Renan, *Averroès et l'Averroisme*, in E. Renan, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1948, vol. 3, p. 12. See Charles Butterworth on the philosophical contribution of Ibn Rushd, 'La Valeur Philosophique des Commentaires d'Averroès sur Aristote', in Jean Jolivet and Rachel Arié (eds), *Multiple Averroès*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978, pp. 117–26. See also Maroun Aouad, 'Does Averroes Have a Philosophy of History?', paper presented at the Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton NJ, as part of the workshop 'Greek Strands in Islamic Political Thought', June 2004, and Maroun Aouad, *Commentaire moyen à la* Rhétorique *d'Aristote par Averroès* (3 vols), Paris: Vrin, 2003.

15 Renan, ibid., p. 13. Note that Renan uses the term 'islamisme' which I am rendering as 'Islamic tradition'. His 'islamisme' does not have the

same connotations as today's usage of Islamism – it is his description of what he considers the dogmatic traits of Islam and the Islamic tradition in general. For an early and general critique of Renan's approach to the Islamic tradition, see Léon Gauthier, *La Théorie d'Ibn Rochd sur les Rapports de la Religion et de la Philosophie*, Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1909, and Jean Paul Charnay, 'Le dernier surgeon de l'averroïsme en Occident: Averroès et l'Averroïsme de Renan', in Jolivet and Arié, *Multiple Averroès*, pp. 333–48.

16 George Saliba, *al-Fikr al-ʿIlmī al-ʿArabī* (Arabic Scientific Thought), Tripoli (Lebanon): Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Masīḥiyya al-Islāmiyya, 1998, pp. 96–130. I am grateful to George Saliba for giving me a copy of his book.

17 Ibid., p. 92.

18 Tony Street, 'The Logic of Avicenna', paper presented in June 2004 at the Centre National des Recherches Scientifiques, Paris.

19 Tony Street, 'Logic', paper presented in March 2004, University of Cambridge.

20 Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, 'Answer of Jamāl ad-Dīn to Renan', *Journal des Débats*, May 18, 1883, translated and annexed in N. R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn 'al-Afghānī'*, Los Angeles CA: University of California Press, 1983, p. 183.

21 Ibid., pp. 182–3.

22 Ibid., p. 187.

23 Ibid.

24 George Hourani, 'Averroès Musulman', in Jolivet and Arié (eds), *Multiple Averroès*, pp. 23–4 (pp. 21–30).

25 Richard C. Taylor, 'Averroes: Religious Dialectic and Aristotelian Philosophical Thought', in Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor, *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2005. See also by the same author '"Truth does not Contradict Truth": Averroes and the Unity of Truth', *Topoi*, vol. 19, 2000, pp. 3–16. I am grateful to Richard Taylor for suggestions, and for making available to me some of his unpublished work.

26 Ibn Rushd, *al-Ḍarūrī fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* (Essentials in the Principles of Jurisprudence) (edited by Jamal al-Din al-ʿAlawi), Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1994, pp. 34–5.

27 Ibid., pp. 37–8.

28 As noted by Jamal al-Din al-ʿAlawi in the Introduction, ibid., p. 22.

29 Charles Butterworth, *Averroes: Decisive Treatise and Epistle Dedicatory*, Provo UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2001, pp. xxxix–xl. I am grateful to Charles Butterworth for making available a copy of his book to me.

30 As rendered by Butterworth, ibid., p. 38.

31 Refer to Chapter 4.

32 For the distinctions between the syllogistic crafts, refer to Chapter 5.

33 The references to *Faṣl* are based on the Arabic text in Marc Geoffroy (translator), *Averroès: Le Livre du Discours Décisif*, Paris: Flammarion, 1996, paragraph 56, p. 156.

34 Ralph Lerner (translator), *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1974, 32.10–20. For a detailed analysis of Ibn Rushd's commentary on Plato's *Republic*, see Charles Butterworth, *Philosophy, Ethics*, *and Virtuous Rule: A Study of Averroes' Commentary on Plato's 'Republic'*, Cairo Papers in Social Science, The American University in Cairo Press, vol. 9, Monograph 1, Spring 1996.
35 See George Tamer, 'Ibn Rushd wa-taḥsīn Awḍāʿ al-Marʾa al-ʿArabiyya' (Ibn Rushd's Contribution to the Improvement of the status of Arab Women), *Minbar Ibn Rushd li al-Fikr al-Ḥurr* (Ibn Rushd's Forum for Freedom of Thought), 3rd issue, Winter 2002. Online. Available at: http://www.ibn-rushd.org/forum/Tamer.htm (accessed 15 April 2004).
36 As translated in Lerner, *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, excerpts from 53.5–30
37 Ibid., 54.5–10.
38 Ibid., 54.10–15.
39 Ibid., 54.15–20.
40 See Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee, 'Introduction', in *Ibn Rushd: The Distinguished Jurist's Primer* (a translation of *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*), Reading: The Centre for Muslim Contribution to Civilisation, 1994, p. xxvii. See also R. Brunshvig, 'Averroès juriste', in R. Brunshvig, *Études d'Orientalisme Dédiées à la Mémoire de Lévi-Provençal*, Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1962, p. 36 (pp. 35–68).
41 Brunshvig, 'Averroès juriste', p. 67.
42 As translated by Nyazee, 'Introduction', 2.3.2.2.4.
43 Cited in Tony Street, 'Alfarabi and the Averroist Interpretation of the Modal Syllogistic', paper presented in March 2004, University of Cambridge.
44 Lerner, *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, 22.5–10.
45 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260a 10–13.
46 Lerner, *Averroes on Plato's Republic*, 27.17–18.
47 Ibid., 60.1–4.
48 Ibid., 60.4–5.
49 *Bidāyat al-Mujtahid*, 10.1.3, p. 456. As translated by Nyazee, including the Qurʾanic verse.
50 Ibid., 10.1.4, p. 461.
51 Ibid., 10.1.4, p. 462.
52 Ibid., 10.1.3, p. 458.
53 Ibid., 10.1.6, pp. 463–4.
54 Jabiri, *Naḥnu wa al-Turāth*, p. 238.
55 Ibid., pp. 240–1.
56 Saliba, *al-Fikr al-ʿIlmī al-ʿArabī*, p. 20.
57 See the following reviews of Chahine's film. Haidar Eid, '*Destiny:* Chahine Re-Writes History', *Cultural Logic*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1998. Online. Available at: http://eserver.org/clogic/2–1/eid.html (accessed 15 April 2004); Andrew Hammond, 'The Incoherence of Destiny', *Cairo Times*, vol. 1, issue 13, August 1997.

Conclusion

1 ʿAbd al-Rahman Munif, *Riḥlat Ḍawʾ*, Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2001, pp. 61–2. Munif is a novelist and a literary critic, born in

Saudi Arabia, but his citizenship was taken away from him in 1963 because of his critical writings and political views. He died in January 2004. The general context of this book is related, but not limited to the various factors contributing to the writing of the Arabic novel.

2 Ibid., p. 126.

3 Amin Al-Mahdi, 'Maktabat al-Iskandariyya bayna Makānihā al-Saḥīḥ wa al-Zamān al-Khaṭa'', *Al-Hayat*, Sunday 24 November 2002, issue no. 14493, Currents section, p. 18. Online. Available at: http://www.alhayat.com/pages/11/11–24/Pages13–18.pdf (accessed 24 November 2002).

4 ʿAli Harb*, al-Mamnūʿ wa al-Mumtaniʿ: Naqd al-Dhāt al-Mufakkira*, Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2000, p. 285. *Mufāḍala* means 'comparison'; I rendered it here as 'rivalry over', which is the meaning of *tafāḍul*, because I take the author to mean that latter sense in this context.

5 Ibid., p. 279.

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