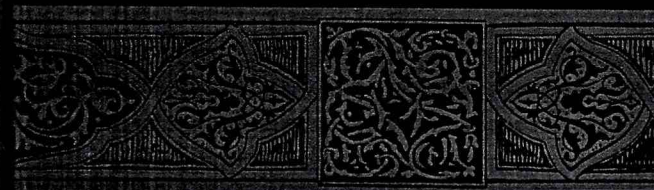# TRENDS
AND
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IN
CONTEMPORARY
Arab
THOUGHT

by
Issa J. Boullata

culture is heading. This may give him or her an idea also where the Arab world itself is heading.

One caveat, however, seems to be necessary at the outset. This author does not believe that thought alone can change society, yet he believes strongly in the power of thought to contribute to any social change. Being itself a product of the social conditions of any group, thought has a dialectical relation to society. It is affected by the conditions of society but it is also capable of affecting them in turn. The material conditions of life, the environment, the production and distribution of wealth, as well as the legal and political and moral systems that sustain them, the institutions that preserve them and the class system that upholds them: all are factors that shape thought. But they are all dialectically related to thought in that, faced by new challenges and needs in these very material conditions of life, man develops ideas that help to create the will to change them. Arab thought is therefore not seen in the writings of these contemporary Arab intellectuals as if it were independent of the material conditions of Arab society. It is rather intimately linked to them as has been explained in this introduction. As such, it will also contribute to change under certain circumstances, as the conclusion of this book will try to show.

Chapter Two

The Arab Heritage in Contemporary Arab Discourse

"The culture of the past is not only the memory of mankind, but our own buried life, and study of it leads to a recognition scene, a discovery in which we see, not our past lives, but the total cultural form of our present life."

Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957),
Paperback edition, 3rd printing 1973, page 346.

Every living human group has a cultural heritage which is a function of its societal structure and which it keeps modifying in accordance with its needs and its own established principles. The latter may vary from group to group but they normally comprise principles of inclusion and exclusion which help the group to determine what cultural elements to include in its heritage and which to exclude in the light of the group's historical experience and felt needs. The aim of modifying the heritage is to enhance the group's viability and ensure its continuity as an identifiable group. As the group moves in time and space it meets with new circumstances that necessitate new institutions, values, attitudes and behavior. Change becomes required but the group does not usually rush into it. For the sake of self-preservation and identity, the group's cultural heritage, entrenched in its institutions, changes only with guarded care and considerable prudence in which intricate systems of checks and balances operate. There may be occasions when quick,

radical action may be necessary to preserve the group. Checks are, therefore, relaxed on these occasions to the degree that is optimal, as the benefits accruing to the group from such action are balanced against the harms that may ensue otherwise. In revolutionary change, the checks are so relaxed or removed by forceful means that many new cultural elements of a radically novel nature are permitted to be included in the heritage in a short period of time, and they eventually become part and parcel of the heritage or, at least, as many of them do as serve the purposes of self-preservation and continuity. Evolutionary change, on the other hand, permits the accretion of new cultural elements and the deletion of old ones in a complex process that takes a much longer time but may achieve results similar to those of revolutionary change, though at a different cost to the group. There may be times when members of the group do not agree among themselves on the necessity or the degree or the modality of change. If disagreement is allowed to continue, the group is in the throes of crisis which must be resolved or else the group's internal conflict will lead to violent change that may affect not only its cultural heritage but also its nature, its unity, its very existence — depending on the situation.

These dynamics of change have acted in Arab society in all periods of history, as they have in other societies. In the contemporary Arab world, the situation has perhaps reached the dimensions of unresolved crisis in that there is prolonged disagreement of wide proportions between the forces of change, some of which tend towards modernity and others towards tradition. Arab society has earlier faced and resolved various other crises in its long history. The present-day one is of long standing since it can be dated from the beginnings of the nineteenth century when traditional Arab culture first encountered modern European culture on a large and — later — increasing scale, particularly in the context of Western colonial hegemony accompanied by gradual cultural penetration. The current crisis manifestations entangled with Arab underdevelopment, domination by Western imperialism and defeat by Zionism have prompted several Arab intellectuals to devote much of their effort to discussions on their cultural heritage with regard to its content, function and value; and some have come up with hypotheses to explain present stagnation and to chart desirable future development.

It is not surprising that, not long after the June war of 1967 and the initial shock of Arab defeat by Israel, the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), established in 1970, called for a "Conference on Authenticity and Renewal in Contemporary Arab Culture" which was held in Cairo between October 4 and 11, 1971. Apparently prepared in haste and with little imagination by the Arab League's bureaucrats, it featured eight papers only,[1] and not many of the leading Arab intellectuals were invited.[2] Some of the papers, however, presented acute analysis and deep insight.

In his paper, Zakī Najīb Maḥmūd went to what he considered to be the heart of the matter by saying:

> The essence of Arab culture, old and modern alike, is that it distinguishes decisively between God and His creatures, between the absolute idea and the universe of change and transience, between eternal truth and events of history, between the immutability of the Everlasting Being and the dynamism of the everchanging being. The former is substance that does not change, the latter is accident that appears then vanishes. The distinction, however, does not place the two modes of existence at one level: it rather makes the world of events a symbol pointing to the world of eternity. . . .[3]

Maḥmūd then analyzed various aspects of the old Arab heritage to show how it dealt with foreign cultural influences throughout history by subjecting them to the characteristic essence he claimed for Arab culture. In a similar fashion, he treated some aspects of modern Arab life and thought, and he showed that they too had to adapt foreign influences to the basic essence of Arab culture in order to be acceptable. He concluded that, in order to be faithful to its authentic and historical roots, Arab culture in modern times had to forego many aspects of modernity because it insisted on clinging to the absolute values of its past. In particular, it rejected the modern concept of man as part of nature and subject to its laws as uncovered by science. Though contemporary Arabs have accepted the results of modern science, especially technology and its products, they have declined to subject all natural phenomena (including man) to the empirical method of science because of the latter's relativity.

In other words, Maḥmūd tried to identify the principles of inclusion and exclusion that operated in the Arab cultural heritage and that gave identity and continuity to Arab culture and the Arab way of life. He seems to believe that very important elements of modernity are excluded, and those of its elements that are included are cut off from the logical principles that produced them, thus leaving them in a precarious position within the Arab consciousness.

On the other hand, Muḥammad al-Mazālī argued in another paper that modernity did not negate Arab authenticity.[4] He analyzed the powerful influence of Western culture and science on Arab thinking but, instead of Arab withdrawal in self-defense or Arab fusion in foreign culture with total loss of identity, he called for a better understanding of the Arab self by a dynamic study of the Arab past and its cultural heritage that would identify the positive characteristics it continued to have. He also called for freedom to shape Arab life within a vital scale of renewed human values, derived from being open to the heritage as well as to the contemporary circumstances and conditions.[5] He affirmed:

> Authenticity is openness or else it is non-existent. For it is an intelligent, sensitive listening to the spirit of the age, an awareness of its given data, a constantly renewed assimilation of its various cultural currents and scientific trends, and a capability for giving, borrowing, reacting, and digesting without [inferiority or superiority] complex or submission.[6]

As Shukrī ᶜAyyād showed in his paper at the same conference, the term authenticity (aṣāla) seldom appeared in the Arabic critical literature of the 1920s and 1930s. He surmised that it began to be widely used after the middle 1950s to mean, among other things, individuality, invention and liberation from tradition.[7] In this sense it meant opposition to imitation, be that imitation of Arab or foreign cultural elements. Yet ᶜAyyād mentioned another usage of the term authenticity which went beyond the first, though it was sometimes associated with it, and it meant the continuous preservation of original ancestral elements in one's culture. This latter meaning contradicted the former but ᶜAyyād argued that the contradiction was

only apparent, since the latter related to national characteristics while the former related to individual talent. What united both meanings was the concept of personality: the personality of the nation depicted in its literature as a whole, and the personality of the individual writer seen in his literary product when compared to that of his peers and contemporaries in the same culture.

The encounter between these two personalities, ᶜAyyād maintained, was the problem of Arab culture in our age.[8] The Arab writer had to reconcile both personalities so that authenticity could unify the group's values and those of the individual. The writers who succeeded did so by critically selecting only those elements of the old culture that were worthy of survival and by discarding those that were not; the successful writers also adopted new elements from modern Western culture and adapted them to the Arab-Islamic culture. This process, ᶜAyyād affirmed, became in time insufficiently acceptable as new literary forms departed further from those of the heritage. Authentication necessitated a deeper dialectical relationship between the imported forms and the Arab ones so that, in effect, authenticity appeared as a relative and ever-developing process wherein one could look for constant qualities and changing ones, provided constancy was not understood to mean immobility but rather continuity.[9]

Although ᶜAyyād spoke mostly of Arabic literature, his analysis can be extended to all aspects of the Arab cultural heritage because, as he himself suggested, they are all interconnected. The achievement of acceptable, genuine authenticity in a fluid, continuously changing process in which old and new elements are in constant dialectical relationship is indeed the crux of Arab intellectual endeavors aiming at solving the civilizational crisis of the contemporary Arab world. New elements alone are not acceptable or possible, nor are old ones alone; but the particular circumstances of Arab culture made the call for renewal more vocal in the first quarter of the twentieth century, as ᶜAyyād says, and that for authenticity more so in the third quarter, both calls being demonstrably complementary.[10]

The debate over the heritage and authenticity in the ever-changing scene in the contemporary Arab world led eventually to a more widely organized conference of Arab intellectuals held

in Kuwait between April 7 and 12, 1974 and hosted by Kuwait University and its Alumni Association. This was only six months after the October 1973 war in which Egypt scored a limited victory of sorts over Israel, and the Arab oil-producing countries imposed a somewhat effective oil embargo on certain Western nations. The focus of the conference, as its theme announced, was "The Crisis of Civilizational Development in the Arab Homeland."[11] There were twenty-two papers presented by notable Arab thinkers and commented on by their peers, then these were followed by animated discussions and further by evaluation panels. A final declaration contained statements in fourteen areas of interest to the Arab intellectuals present.[12] But the central issue of the conference remained the relation of the past to the present and the future of the Arabs. In the fourth statement, "On the Heritage," the conference's Final Declaration said:

> The problem which the symposium continually encountered in more than one of its study-papers and in different ways was the role of the Arab past in orienting the [Arab] future. Whether we call this problem that of authenticity and renovation, or the heritage and modernization, or atavism and westernization, or anything else, it has taken this role of multiple facets and influence in Arab civilizational development only because our look at it has been ahistorical.
>
> This heritage is part of us and part of our civilizational formation. But it ought not to make our future possessed by our past. The attempt to project the past onto the future, besides being doomed to failure, leads to a rupture between the Arab and his present, and between him and his future. The fusion of the idea of authenticity with that of the heritage is a dangerous pitfall. Authenticity does not consist in literal clinging to the heritage but rather in setting out from it to what follows, and from its values to a new phase in which there is enrichment for it and development of its values. Real revivification of the heritage is possible only through a creative, historical, and critical comprehension of it; through transcending it in a new process of creation; through letting the past remain past so that it may not compete with the present and the future; and through a new assimilation of it from the perspectives of the present and the future.[13]

The conference declaration recognized the fact of intellectual backwardness in the Arab world and its strong relation to other kinds of historically-caused societal backwardness. The school of thought which attempted to revive the old Arab culture without renewing it, and that which rejected Arab culture altogether and moved towards the modern culture of the present age were both declared to be wrong.[14] Support was given to the school of thought, considered as not yet deeply rooted in the Arab world, which would create authentic and — at the same time — modern Arab thought by adopting a transcending and renewing attitude to the Arab heritage, and not a static and retrieving one. In particular, the conference declaration called for a deepening of scientific thinking and rational method and for a linking of Arab thought to the foundations of modern civilization based on science, technology, organization and planning.[15]

More than any other participant, Zakī Najīb Maḥmūd called for rationality in his address to the conference.[16] He said that resort to reason was the one single criterion common to all civilizations, be it that of Pericles's Athens, al-Ma'mūn's Baghdad, the Medicis' Florence, or Voltaire's Paris. He claimed that contemporary Arabs paid only lip service to rationality but did not follow it through by changing their lifestyles, customs and values accordingly. They accepted modern technological products like cars, airplanes and appliances of heating and cooling, but not the necessary rational underpinnings of the modern age based on science, technology and utilitarian ethics. According to him, the Arabs had either to live the life of the modern age with all its ethical and rational requirements or else "wring its neck" so that it might see the world through Arab eyes. He claimed that contemporary Arabs did neither, but were content to live simultaneously in two contradictory cultures, thus permitting themselves to fall into a civilizational crisis. The way out for the Arabs, in his view, was to adopt the model of modern life prevalent today in parts of Europe and America, the Arab cultural distinctiveness being in the retention of certain aspects of religious doctrine, art and social conventions not conflicting with the scientific movement in any of its branches.

In their comment, Suhayl Idrīs and ᶜAbd Allāh ᶜAbd al-Dā'im agreed with Maḥmūd on the necessity of rationality,

but they both disagreed with him on his understanding of civilization. They argued that civilization had other components besides reason and they pointed to the importance of affective elements like religious or ideological faith, will power, innovation and aesthetic creativity in literature and the arts. Furthermore, Idrīs averred America was not such an ideal model: where freedom had contradictory meanings depending on whether one was white or black, where Zionism and Israel were lavishly funded to exterminate Palestinians and where Arabs were generally scorned and considered to be second-class human beings.[17]

Shākir Muṣṭafā's contribution to the conference started from the anguished conscience of the committed Arab who asked why the efforts of the Arabs to become modern failed tragically even though they had spent more years being involved in modern civilization than had contemporary China, Russia and Japan, and yet the latter nations had all reached modernity but not the Arabs.[18] His answer was that the relations of the Arabs to what they called their past, their history, their heritage or their ancestors, unlike that of any other nation, had a particularly strong influence on them. Thus in their modern search for identity, their concern with authenticity (aṣāla) was often almost overwhelmed by ideas of history and the heritage which outweighed other meanings of authenticity related to innovation and creativity.[19] In recent years which witnessed revolutions, development projects, educational expansion and socialist trends in the Arab world, there was a parallel recourse to the Arab heritage and a felt need to define the Arab attitude to it. Muṣṭafā regretted that the Arab view of history continued to be a static, reactionary one. He said:

> We [Arabs] do not look at [history] as points of departure but as end boundaries; we do not look at it as mere sap but as ready branches to hang on and swing. We do not see it as a history that bore a thousand possibilities but rather as a one-dimensional history that has the one form it actually took.[20]

He explained that that was why the heritage continued to be the central problem of debate that divided the Arabs into rightists and leftists, reactionaries and progressives, traditionalists and modernists.[21]

Muṣṭafā then analyzed the prevailing Arab value system and institutions in the light of the historical influence of the heritage with particular reference to the modes of economic production, the system of political authority, the nature of social relations, and the intellectual activity of the Arabs. In spite of the admitted existence of many positive values and ideals in the Arab cultural heritage, Muṣṭafā noted the predominance in practice of negative ones, both in the past and in the present. He observed that obedience to authority pervaded all societal structures and intellectual constructs. Whether in the Arab patriarchal family, the Arab government, the Arab educational system or the Arab religious establishment—conformity, coercion and repression were the rule. Emphasis was on the forbidden and on the necessity of preserving the order of things. As a result there was, in Muṣṭafā's view, a general atmosphere of apathy and submission in Arab society, and also a great measure of dissimulation and hypocrisy. Social solidarity functioned only at the primary levels of social structure where the crushed individual could find some security, as in the family, the tribe, the ethnic group or the religious sect. Even there he or she was followed, as everywhere else, by taboos on sex relations and emphasis on duties and obligations. Otherworldly values and concepts loomed large in the life of the individual as havens of hope and consolation, but the ultimate tendency was one of submissiveness and surrender to a coercive reality. In spite of recent economic development, the basic mode of production, in Muṣṭafā's view, remained the traditional one because only a few benefited from the change introduced, and they were largely the same who had been elite before any change occurred. The intellectual basis of contemporary Arab culture, Muṣṭafā affirmed, was mainly the great past contributions of the second and the third centuries of the Islamic era which had witnessed immense creativity, later followed by mere repetition and rumination, but hardly any development.[22]

The present age is generally characterized by a static condition in all aspects of Arab life, according to Muṣṭafā. The heritage places the Arabs in a problematic situation: on the one hand they are alienated from it because of long contentment with its static elements alone, and on the other they are alienated from the modern age because of their ignorance of its basic intellectual principles. The challenge to the Arabs today,

Muṣṭafā believes, is to adapt the inner structures of their age-old heritage to the modern age, and to do that at a speed that will make the Arab bloc of vast masses catch up with the ever-racing modern civilization. This should be done, not by getting out of history (which is impossible), but indeed by historical thinking, using the instrumentality of history itself and its logic to direct Arab vision, thought, language and action from the past to the future, not in a sense of continuity, but in a dialectical sense that is committed to the past, the present and the future.[23]

The heritage came up again at the conference as a discussion topic in the paper presented by Fu'ād Zakariyyā who condemned its Arab critics as well as its Arab supporters because both groups, in his view, had an ahistorical vision of the heritage: the former when they considered it as the cause of present Arab backwardness because of its negative elements, and the latter when they considered it as the only way for future Arab progress because of its eternally useful and rich content.[24] For him the correct historical view of the heritage was one that placed it in its actual context of the past and looked at it from a relative perspective as a phase that had come to an end and vanished in later phases which it gradually transcended until it brought the Arabs to the present.[25] According to this view, Zakariyyā said, the past was not a rival force to the present, for the present bore the seeds of the past, and the past gave rise to the present, by gradually transcending itself. All functional elements of the past heritage were thus continuously borne and developed in the historical process and have eventually come down to the present. Those not functional were abandoned, causing a cultural or civilizational rupture with the past. There is no need, in Zakariyyā's view, to revivify the heritage because its life has continued to the present. Those who would revivify dead and, therefore, useless elements of the past heritage to solve modern problems were rather seeking functions that the heritage could not perform.[26] Progress would depend on a new Arab beginning. The real problem, according to Zakariyyā, was not that the heritage had—among other things—irrational, otherworldly or superstitious elements (undesirable as they might be) but that it competed with the present meaninglessly and divided thinkers uselessly, and was a main cause of intellectual backwardness.[27]

Qusṭanṭīn Zurayq, in his comment, agreed that this view of the heritage that Zakariyyā criticized was ahistorical, but he added that it was more an aspect and a result of Arab backwardness than a main cause of it.[28] He also agreed that there was a rupture in Arab civilization, but he rejected Zakariyyā's attitude of merely accepting that as a fact without going into its causes, for here lay the factors leading to present Arab intellectual backwardness.[29] He did not consider this rupture unique to the Arabs, as Zakariyyā had done, and he explained that what was ruptured was civilizational creativity and progress, and not the heritage as such.[30]

Anwar ᶜAbd al-Malik's paper on Arab specificity and authenticity used Egypt's historical example as a society dependent for civilized continuity on a long-standing national heritage of political centralization and military control because of its geographical features and location. Egyptian specificity thus lay in these permanent factors which, in his view, ought to be taken into consideration by anyone who would bring modernity and progress to the country.[31]

Maḥmūd Amīn al-ᶜĀlim in his comment refused to accept the generalization and abstraction of ᶜAbd al-Malik's view, and insisted that each historical period had its own specificity within a general concept of historical continuity, and that there was a need to transcend such specificity by consciously controlling it and changing it by mass struggle that would lead to progress.[32] The heritage, to him, was to be critically and historically comprehended in its totality, not in a utilitarian manner nor by blind imitation, sanctification or partial selection, but by deepening the historical sense of Arab reality and firmly rooting the Arab self in it so that the heritage could be creatively invoked,[33] the real repository of national specificity being always the Arab masses.[34]

There were other discussions of the heritage at the conference, notably that of Adonis (ᶜAlī Aḥmad Saᶜīd) who, taking al-Ghazālī as a model of thought that pervaded the Arab-Islamic cultural heritage, concluded that the prevailing contemporary Arab thought was conformist, not only confirming the tradition, but also rejecting and condemning innovation. He therefore called for Arab liberation from all atavism. He advo-

cated the elimination of all sanctity attributed to the past, and asked that it be considered as an experience or knowledge absolutely not binding. He called upon Arabs to believe that "the essence of man is not in being a conforming inheritor but rather in being a transforming creator."[35]

One other notable discussion of the heritage at the conference was that of Muhammad al-Nuwayhī[36] who opined that the greatest Arab problem lay, not in the purely intellectual encounter between Islam and modern civilization, but rather in the practical and social needs of contemporary Arab society. The cause of this problem is, in al-Nuwayhī's view, the prevalent belief that the Islamic Sharīᶜa is an immutable and comprehensive system of law which is sufficient for all human needs and is good for all times and places without amendment or addition.[37] He said that this belief arose only gradually after the Sharīᶜa had witnessed continuous development in the first five centuries of the Islamic era. Neither in the Prophet's lifetime nor later in the period of his Companions and their Followers was there a belief that God alone was the sole legislator. It was only in the sixth century A.H. that this belief began to grow and only in the eighth century and onwards that it became petrified.[38] Al-Nuwayhī gives a brief account of how Islamic law, in its dynamic and formative period, developed to accommodate changing circumstances of society from the time of Prophet Muhammad himself onwards until its development slowed down in the sixth and the seventh centuries A.H., then entered its dark ages of rigidity following the eighth century A.H.[39] He agrees with Muhammad ᶜAbduh and his al-Manār disciples that Islam has fundamentals (uṣūl) and branches (furūᶜ): the former relating to doctrine, worship rituals and ethics that cannot be changed; the latter relating to all rules governing social transactions and relations that may be changed in accordance with the needs of changing conditions.[40] He therefore openly calls for an organized, continuous and brave campaign against the traditional view of Islam to convince people that the role of religion is to purify worship, cleanse the soul and guide creatures to the Creator and that, in dealing with worldly matters, it only gives general principles and ideals and, in legislating for urgent needs, it does not give rules for all future times

nor mean to perpetuate certain patterns of life. Al-Nuwayhī clarifies his ideas more frankly when he says:

> The aim of the required intellectual campaign is to convince people of the necessity of adopting a purely secular view in all matters relating to their living conditions and their world. [The campaign] will not succeed unless it convinces them that — apart from matters of doctrine — Islam, the religion of the majority [of Arabs], does not conflict with the secular view. Rather, it is not an exaggeration for us to affirm that its stance regarding matters of our world is a purely secular one.[41]

In his comment, Muhammad Abū Rīdah disagreed with al-Nuwayhī's call for secularism. He asserted that Islam cannot really have a secular view of human life in this world. On the contrary, Islam considers man's life to be a part of the comprehensive divine plan for everything, and thus related to high wise aims in which man is held responsible for his deeds on earth.[42] But Abū Rīdah agreed that there was need for development in Islamic law and doctrine to build on the dispersed efforts of individuals or small groups, and he called for the convening of two international conferences, one on Islamic law and another on Islamic doctrine, to study ways of developing both so that they may be appropriately fit for the Arab renaissance and modern civilization.[43]

There was no discussion at the conference regarding Arab women in the process of change in the Arab world. There were references to the inferior position of the female in the Arab autocratic family in Hishām Sharābī's paper on "The Family and Civilizational Development in Arab Society."[44] The thrust of his paper was an analysis of the stunting conditions of child-rearing in the Arab family. In fact all the speakers at the conference were men,[45] and problems related to Arab women were all but ignored.

For Mahdī ᶜĀmil, what was really absent from the Kuwait conference was Marxist-Leninist thought (except for Mahmūd Amīn al-ᶜĀlim's comment on Anwar ᶜAbd al-Malik's paper).[46] ᶜĀmil's book, appearing three months after the conference, is a scathing criticism of all the presentations (except al-ᶜĀlim's

comment), declaring them to be confused expressions of the crisis of the Arab bourgeoisies that dominate the Arab world. Thus, according to him, the crisis is not that of civilizational development in the Arab homeland, nor is it inherent in the Arab mind or the Arab heritage that is considered to be unable to adapt itself to changing conditions of modernity and is therefore deficient. The crisis is rather in the intrinsic structural inability of the locally dominant Arab bourgeoisies to transcend themselves because, as colonial bourgeoisies, they are dependent on the Western imperialist bourgeoisies and they lack the will to shake themselves loose lest they lose their local dominance in the Arab world. Their only recourse is to the illusion of being like the Other, i.e., like the Western imperialist bourgeoisies. According to ᶜĀmil, the dependence of the colonial Arab bourgeoisies on the Western imperialist bourgeoisies is a structural alliance which necessarily dictates difference between them, not likeness; hence the impossibility, for the Arab bourgeoisies, of attaining the perfect model they see in this Other, particularly because their pre-capitalist origins are in a dominant aristocratic or feudal class that never really broke away from its past thought but rather adapted itself internally to colonial bourgeois needs, and thus adapted bourgeois thought accordingly.[47]

For Mahdī ᶜĀmil, Arab thought can be liberated from the dominance of bourgeois ideology only by the theoretical tools of the Marxist-Leninist concepts which alone produce the scientific knowledge able to possess full cognition of the social historical reality. This liberation should necessarily start from the working class position whose ideology is the contradiction of dominant bourgeois thought. The movement to socialism is, therefore, the production of Arab thought that recognizes the universality of Marxism-Leninism with regard to class struggle in the Arab world as a movement of national liberation, i.e., a revolutionary transformation of the prevailing structure of the relations of production in the Arab world and the formation of a new structure.[48]

As for the present-day Arab debate on the heritage (at least the intellectual heritage), it is nothing but an expression of contemporary Arab bourgeois thought that reproduces itself ideologically, since it is absolutely impossible for it, or for anybody

else, to see the past or look at it except from the present, which is itself ideologically determined by class position. On the other hand, the proletarian view of the heritage, according to Mahdī ᶜĀmil, is the scientific view, i.e., the Marxist-Leninist view, that takes the Arab heritage as a subject of knowledge to be possessed as history, now wrongly seen through bourgeois interpretation only. Scientific knowledge of Arab history is none other than the movement of the Arab working class to possess its own social reality by producing the historical knowledge that liberates it through revolution.[49] Thus, Mahdī ᶜĀmil rejects the notion hatched at the Kuwait conference that the crisis of the Arab world lies in its backwardness caused by the continuity of the past in the present without change. He also rejects the idea that its resolution lies in the movement of Arab society to the present technological age under the Arab bourgeoisies leadership. The only solution for him is the movement of the Arab world, not from its own past to the present of the Other, but from its present colonial reality to socialism.[50]

There is no doubt that the Kuwait conference was one of the most important cultural events to occur in the Arab world in recent years, if only for its attempt to raise questions and address them freely. It cannot be said that there was agreement in it among Arab intellectuals. In fact there was not only disagreement (despite the Final Declaration), but also lack of common ground in the understanding of basic terms like heritage, culture and authenticity, and in the viewpoints from which culture could be said to be related to society and history. Nevertheless, the conference proceedings stimulated further thought which, directly or indirectly, engendered the publication of more books and articles, and the holding of more conferences and symposia. The Arab world was entering a period that was highlighted by the Kuwait conference and characterized by a climate of intense discourse focusing on identity and self-analysis. Arab intellectuals of all ideological leanings participated in this discourse to the exhilaration of growing numbers of avid listeners or readers among the Arab public. The issue of the heritage (*turāth*) was the hub of much intellectual activity. The word 'crisis' (*azma*) began to be commonplace.

ᶜAbd Allāh al-ᶜArwī's book, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism?* had already appeared in

a different Arabic version as *al-ʿArab wa-l-Fikr al-Tārīkhī* (The Arabs and Historical Thinking)[52] and had condemned the ahistorical thinking of both the traditionalists and all the other Arab intellectuals dubbed "eclectics" because they adopt selected elements from Western culture. Al-ʿArwī's position is that their thought leads nowhere but to continued dependence on the West on all levels. The traditionalists reliving medieval Islamic thought and perpetuating it, and the "eclectics" borrowing what is not theirs and impossibly trying to graft it to their Arab heritage—remove themselves from reality, both remaining subordinate to others. The only way to liberate Arab thinking, according to al-ʿArwī consists in strict submission to the discipline of historical thought and acceptance of all its assumptions. He agrees that the Arabs can find the best school of historical thought in Marxism, which can explain contemporary Arab alienation and help make long-term plans of action toward liberation.[53]

He believes that the Arab intellectual, whether traditionalist or "eclectic," has not been able to help his society to liberate itself because he is always separated from the real environment he lives in by intellectually inhabiting another world, the world of the past or the world of the Other, which he turns into absolute reality. Thus, both traditionalist and "eclectic" live in an unrealistic perpetual present and are consequently ineffective in their society, which, as a result, is controlled by those calling for sheer continuity. The only weapon against this ineffectiveness, according to al-ʿArwī, is the acquisition of historical thinking. The latter cannot be learnt from the study of history as such, but rather requires conviction of a theory of history; and this, it is claimed, does not exist today anywhere in a comprehensive and persuasive manner but in Marxism. Al-ʿArwī recognizes that historicist Marxism is not the whole truth of Marxism, but he believes that this is what the Arab world needs in the present conditions in order to create an intellectual elite able to modernize it intellectually, politically and economically. After the establishment of the economic base, he believes, modern Arab thought will become stronger and will develop further.[54]

The necessity for a comprehensive review of the Arab-Islamic past in order to determine what the heritage was and what its relation to the present should be was increasingly be-

coming an imperative for many Arab intellectuals. It is not that previous generations of modern Arab intellectuals had not gone through a similar exercise, for there were writers like Aḥmad Amīn,[55] Ṭāhā Ḥusayn,[56] ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād,[57] Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal,[58] to mention only a few of the immediately previous generation, who had left voluminous works on the subject. But there was now an urgent new need to reassess the past in the light of pressing new issues and events. Several attempts were undertaken in this regard, but I will give a brief survey of the most relevant to the issue at hand and will limit myself here to some of the writings of Adonis (ʿAlī Aḥmad Saʿīd), al-Ṭayyib Tīzīnī, Ḥusayn Muruwwa, Ḥasan Ḥanafī and Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī. All of these are anguished writers concerned for the Arab future: they study the past in order to rehabilitate the present and suggest ways of achieving a better tomorrow.

Adonis, a Syrian-Lebanese poet of extreme versatility and fecund creativity, had compiled in the 1960s a three-volume anthology featuring the best of the poetic heritage of the Arabs from pre-Islamic times to the First World War.[59] His observation that Arab poetic taste was governed by a strict conformist aesthetic led him to embark on a systematic investigation of Arab culture as a whole, particularly in its formative first three centuries following the rise of Islam, in order to discover its ethos and the extent to which the latter might still exercise power over the Arabs of today. His findings have been published in a three-volume work entitled *al-Thābit wa-l-Mutaḥawwil: Baḥth fī-l-Ittibāʿ wa-l-Ibdāʿ ʿInd al-ʿArab* (Continuity and Change: A Study of Conformity and Creativity among the Arabs).[60] His interpretation in it of the prevailing Arab culture as rooted in the dominant Arab-Islamic heritage is one of the sharpest and most daring indictments of Arab culture in modern times.

Adonis argues that the mentality (*dhihniyya*) which has dominated and oriented Arab life, being that of those historically in power, had four characteristics.

First, on the ontological level is its theologism (*lāhūtāniyya*), by which he means an excessive tendency to separate God from man and to consider the religious conception of God as the origin, the axis, and the end of everything. Thus

for Adonis, the Arab mind is the mind of abstract oneness and absolute metaphysics. In socio-political life this reflects itself in the reification of the nation, the community or the state which is nothing but a theologistic projection and, therefore, a metaphysical abstraction. Man does not exist by himself, but by God, and hence, in the world, he only exists by religion, by the community, by the state and by the family. He cannot, therefore, practice his human essence as an individual man, for he does not have the freedom of creativity and innovation. He exists secondarily by others and primarily by God, the totally Other.

Second, on the psychological-existential level, is the Arab mind's preteritism (*māḍawiyya*), by which Adonis means its clinging to what is already known and its rejection, even fear, of what is unknown. The Arab feels that his existence depends on the continuity of past symbols and structures, and he is often violent to anyone who threatens them. He uses what is known, his heritage, to understand everything. If that does not illumine the unknown, the latter is not worth validation.

Third, on the level of expression and language is the Arab mind's separation between ideas and speech. Ideas are considered as existing before speech, the latter being only a form or an embellished image of ideas. There cannot, therefore, be any innovation in ideas but only in the form they may take. Hence, Arabic literature is essentially conformist.

Fourth, on the level of civilizational development, is the Arab contradiction with modernity because, for an Arab, what is old and known is the source of all his private and public values and of all that regulates his relations with the world. The Arab personality, like Arab culture, revolves around the past. Real modernity lies in creativity and innovation, which the Arab rejects because he rejects doubt, experimentation, the absolute freedom of search and the adventure of exploring the unknown and of accepting it.[61]

These four characteristics of the mentality of the historically dominant groups in Arab society represent, for Adonis, the forces of continuity that have imposed conformity since the rise of Islam, because change would threaten their existence. The Arab-Islamic groups that have been taken by the idea of creating a new world are those that have created new concepts

regarding the relation of God and man, and that of man and man, and have given religion, politics and life new dimensions. The Sufi experience, for example, was a negation of the abstract idea of divine transcendence in traditional Islamic theology. The rationalist tendencies of the Mu'tazila and Muslim scientists, the socialistic tendencies of the Qarāmiṭa, the atheistic tendencies negating the need for prophets and religion, and those that opposed chauvinistic Arabism and wanted to replace it by brotherly Islamism, as well as those that introduced ideas of a new hermeneutic giving priority to reason over tradition, and those that supported *ḥaqīqa* (truth) over *sharī'a* (law), and all movements to revolutionize the Arabic poetic language—all these have historically been forces of change and creativity in the Arab heritage, according to Adonis, though they have all been subdued by the dominant forces of continuity and conformity.[62]

Adonis suggests, therefore, that Arab culture in its prevalent inherited form has a religious structure and is thus conformist and past-oriented. It does not only confirm the tradition, it rejects innovation and condemns it. This culture in its present form obstructs any real progress. Arab life, for Adonis, cannot prosper and the Arab person cannot create unless the traditional structure of the Arab mind is destroyed so that the manner of viewing and understanding things can be changed. This should start from the idea that the basis of Arab culture is multiple, not unitary, and that it does not have the vitality of transcending itself unless it gets rid of the religious structure so that religion may become a purely personal experience.[65]

This deconstruction of the old traditional structure of Arab culture should not, according to Adonis, be done by any other instrumentality than that of the Arab heritage itself, and emphasis must be made in it on the fact that truth is not to be found in the mind but rather in experience. True living experience changes the world. Yet the primary elements of change are within the Arab heritage itself. They are, however, without value insofar as they are past: their value is in the power they have to become part of the future when used innovatively. Arabs should therefore consciously resort to these vital elements of potential change in their own heritage and thereby transcend their past creatively, radically, comprehensively and ir-

revocably,[64] or else there will be no change at all, but rather repetition and imitation of the past.

Essentially Adonis's study calls for:

> . . . the necessity of liberating the Arab from every kind of atavism (*salafiyya*), and the necessity of eliminating sanctity from the past and of considering it part of an experience or knowledge that is absolutely not binding. Consequently, man must be viewed as one whose true human essence is in being a transforming creator more than a conforming inheritor.[65]

Modernity for Adonis is not merely the quality characteristic of a contemporary or a recent period of history. It is rather a mode of thought, an attitude to the world, a conception of time and a philosophy of man totally different from those of the received wisdom of tradition. Thus, for example, in discussing atheism in the context of the rationalist thought of Ibn al-Rāwandī (died probably A.D. 910 or 912) and al-Rāzī (died probably A.D. 925 or 932), Adonis says approvingly that atheism "is the first form of modernity, because the criticism of Revelation in a society built on Revelation is not only the first condition for all criticism but also the first condition for all progress."[66] Further to the criticism of Revelation, it is necessary to eliminate religion from society and establish reason. This elimination should not be limited to the state or to public religion, but private religion should also be eliminated, i.e., the religion of the individual himself.[67] Modernity is thus equated with absolute secularism and rationalism, which alone can bring about social justice, equality, and progress. Man, not God, must be the center of the universe and he himself should, by his freedom and his will, make history and build society and the state in accordance with the dictates of his reason. Only man's experience and effectiveness in the outside world can lead to the knowledge of truth, not any speculation, contemplation or religious *a priori* presumption.[68]

It is obvious how this flies in the face of traditional Islamic views of man, the world and God. Adonis has been severely criticized and even accused of being anti-Arab. His dependence on historically-marginal personalities and views in Arab culture as elements of change was raised to show his misunderstanding of the thrust of the mainstream of the culture. His interpreta-

tions of both the mainstream and the marginal elements were further criticized as totally out of context, particularly in the way he was thought to have misread and distorted the original intentions of the texts he studied. He was said to have been influenced by Orientalists hostile to Islam and, as a poet with an emotive sensibility, to have lacked the very things that he called for, namely, rationalism and objectivism.[69]

This, however, did not deter Adonis, for he pursued this line of thinking dauntlessly in his subsequent writings. In his book *Fātiḥa li-Nihāyāt al-Qarn: Bayānāt min Ajl Thaqāfa ᶜArabiyya Jadīda* (Overture to the Endings of the Century: Declarations for a New Arab Culture),[70] he brazenly says:

> Different culture can begin only by a criticism of the heritage in a radical and comprehensive way, for we cannot build a new culture if we do not critically shake the structures of the old culture. Without that, the new culture will [merely] be a layer that accumulates on the layers of the old culture so that these latter will [eventually] absorb it, and it will have no effectiveness.[71]

This radical position of Adonis's is matched by another Syrian's, this time a full-fledged Marxist one, namely, that of Ṭayyib Tīzīnī, who has planned a twelve-volume study of the intellectual Arab-Islamic heritage, two tomes of which have already been published.[72] Tīzīnī acknowledges at the start that the heritage has two aspects, the cognitive and the utilitarian, which are in a dialectical relationship to each other. He believes that the utilitarian aspect has often been wrongly seen as the only truth about the heritage, and thus the dialectical unity of its two aspects has been bracketed off and its cognitive aspect sacrificed. This happens, he says, whenever the heritage is vulgarly made to serve certain pragmatic interests and needs of a segment (usually the dominant class) of society, thus in fact revealing an ideological stand. Tīzīnī emphasizes the necessity of a scientific and progressive methodology that takes into serious consideration the inner historical movement of the heritage in its true contextual circumstances, far from any ideological imposition or forced interpretive intrusion. He says, "In heritage research, as in scientific research generally, truth is such (i.e. truth), not

because it is utilitarian but rather, on the contrary, it is utilitarian because it is true."[73]

Basing his views on Marxism, Tīzīnī develops a theory of studying the intellectual Arab-Islamic heritage as a constructive alternative to what he considers to be the ahistorical, aheritagial (lā-tārīkhī lā-turāthī) approaches of the reactionary traditionalists, the liberal eclectics, the ultra-modernists, the pseudo-objectivists and the Eurocentric Orientalists, all of whom he criticizes.[74]

Tīzīnī believes in the dialectical relationship between the socio-economic and political conditions in society, on the one hand, and the corresponding intellectual structure on the other. The relationship between these two poles is not one-dimensional in matters of influencing or being influenced, nor is it one in which either has an exclusive power to determine it. He maintains that the former pole has a decisive edge because it has an indirect, mediating characteristic that defines the horizons of progress or backwardness in society in any of its historical periods, and therefore it has an advantage in defining the general path of intellectual life in it.[75] Nevertheless, Tīzīnī believes thought retains a measure of relative autonomy from socio-economic and political conditions and he argues that their relationship is not a mechanical, but rather a complex, one. Socio-economic and political relations indirectly and mediately set the possibility for the rise and development of thought over long periods, but it is the inner structure and logic of human thought itself that transforms this possibility into a necessity. Thought continually attempts to free itself from social reality, but this freedom remains relative because, however far-reaching, it cannot release itself from social reality in an absolute manner.[76]

In this framework, Tīzīnī sees history (tārīkh) and heritage (turāth) as an objective reality in that both emphasize the past, be it an event or an artifact or a human product of any sort. But whereas history cannot be said to constitute an element of the present moment, inasmuch as it continues to be past and retains its previous characteristics, the heritage extends into the present, forming some of its dimensions as they both (past and present) interpenetrate and interlock. Thus the heritage is history, i.e. the past, continuing into the present.[77]

Tīzīnī says that this continuation into the present is not only what occurs spontaneously but also what is humanly assimilated and stored up from the past by way of conscious selection from the heritage. Such selection is a continuous process in human existence: it happened in the past and continues to happen in the present. Every moment in human history was a present at one time and, as such, it was the focal point at which socio-economic, political and intellectual forces of continuity met with similar forces of discontinuity. The historian should disentangle the factors that make up these forces and, to do so successfully, he should have a rigorous, scientific methodology as well as a progressive, ideologically-conscious approach. Both are necessary for valid research in authenticating original sources and in interpreting them and discerning their past historical import within the comprehensive, civilizational social framework in which they were formed.[78] Tīzīnī admits there is here a preconceived manner in the method, but he insists it is not, nor should it be, arbitrary and artificial in its application, but rather it should be developed and refined to the point of accuracy in the very act of its application and in the light of its results.[79] The point is that no research can be done without preconceived notions of the problems of scientific research. Awareness of this fact should help the preconception to continuously perfect itself scientifically. Ignoring it makes the researcher liable to methodological superficiality and arbitrariness without even knowing it.

Tīzīnī calls his theory "historical heritagial dialectics" (al-jadaliyya al-tārīkhiyya al-turāthiyya) and he avers it is an embodiment, enrichment and development of historical dialectical materialism.[80] Two concepts are essential for its application: the first is the concept of "the contemporary national phase," the second is that of "heritagial selectivity." The first concept is equivalent to what Marx and Engels called "the socio-economic formation," later developed further by Lenin, and it refers to the totality of exigences, requirements and horizons of the prevailing social structure of a society in a particular phase of its development as a societal unit with a class system.[81] It is essential for the theory because it requires the inclusion of socio-economic factors in the understanding of the history and the heritage of the society studied and it requires this understanding

to be from the viewpoint of the national aspirations and needs of that society in the period studied. The concept of "heritagial selectivity" is also essential because it allows for conscious choice from among the elements of the national heritage, the choice being of those elements that had relative value in the past as well as those that continue to have absolute value for the present and the future, the criterion being the requirements of the contemporary national phase. Tīzīnī says there are two aims here: the first is scientific and academic, and it lies in highlighting progress achieved in the past within the social class struggle of the period studied; and the second is scientific and academic but also practical and applied, and it lies in carrying forward this progress into the present and the future. He admits of the conscious and intentional politicization of heritage study but stresses the fact that it is not imposed on the scholarly study of it but is rather a necessary contemporary embodiment of it, impelled by the needs of the contemporary national phase.[82]

The purpose of the theory is to create a "heritagial revolution," meaning not only a revolution in the cognitive understanding of the heritage but also a revolution grounded in the progressive elements of the heritage continuously looking out to a future horizon in which scientific socialism becomes possible. This "heritagial revolution" is one aspect of the "cultural revolution" needed in the Arab world, its relation to it being that of the particular to the general. The cultural revolution does not happen in a vacuum but rather within the framework of specific social relations, hence the primal necessity of a "social revolution" which will deal with two realities in the Arab world: civilizational backwardness and national dismemberment.[83] According to Tīzīnī this two-pronged social revolution should be a socialist revolution because the Arab hybrid class of the bourgeois-feudalists which has continued to dominate the Arab world since the beginnings of the Arab nahḍa (renaissance) of the 19th century is economically incapable and socially unable and, in fact, ideologically unwilling to achieve a social revolution because of its dependent relations with capitalist imperialist forces. Only the working classes of the Arab homeland are qualified and able to achieve the three interdependent revolutions mentioned above, i.e., the heritagial, the cultural and the

socialist revolutions; and only they can transcend the present-day socio-economic structure in the Arab world and bring about the socialist revolution and its necessary, though transitional, dialectical concomitant, pan-Arab national unity.[84]

There is no doubt that Tīzīnī has made diligent efforts to relate Marxism to Arab history and the Arab heritage, unlike some other leftists whom he criticizes and who have presented socialist ideas and doctrines in a way that has alienated them from the Arab masses and Arab intellectuals.[85] Yet one does not have to wait until all twelve volumes of his project are published to see how he applies his new theory to Arab history and the Arab heritage, because he has already given a foretaste of that in the first volume by several examples of application. He has been criticized by other Arab thinkers for too rigid a schematization in the application of Marxist analysis to Arab history[86] as well as for factual errors in historical data and lack of sufficient or appropriate documentation.[87] There is still need for greater scholarly efforts in order to unearth all the socio-economic and political data in Arab-Islamic history before a meaningful, let alone a Marxist, interpretation of Arab culture can be adequately made relating culture to societal conditions. Yet it must be conceded that Tīzīnī's efforts are pioneering and must be appreciated as such for their definite contributions and for all the discussions and further research they have occasioned.[88]

Ḥusayn Muruwwa (d. 1987) is another pioneer in the application of Marxist theory to Arab thought. In his impressive two-volume work, al-Nazaᶜāt al-Māddiyya fī-l-Falsafa al-ᶜArabiyya al-Islāmiyya[89] (Materialist Trends in Arab-Islamic Philosophy), he studies the intellectual activities of the Arabs and relates them to change in societal conditions on a grand scale from pre-Islamic times to the middle of the thirteenth century A.D. His long introduction[90] makes it quite clear that his work is not just another history book on Arab-Islamic philosophy but rather a serious attempt to deal with a modern Arab problem, namely, how contemporary Arab thought should view its past intellectual heritage in a new light that accords with the revolutionary orientations of the Arab national liberation movement of the present.

Muruwwa notes that although the heritage is a single heritage, there have been numerous interpretations of it. He explains that this is due to the ideological differences of the interpreters which are basically class differences, a facet which is true of any society.[91] The ideology he consciously adopts is that of the contemporary Arab social classes and groups suffering from material and spiritual misery under all kinds of national repression and despoilment by imperialism and Zionism. The scientific revolutionary thought of this ideology is, he says, the thought of scientific socialism with its two bases: dialectical materialism and historical materialism.[92] Through the latter, the heritage will be understood historically from the viewpoint of its relation to the past social structure which produced it and the historical conditions which engendered that specific social structure. This will bring about a new understanding of the heritage and hence it will lead to the liberation of present-day Arab thought from its state of dependency on Western imperialist thought and Arab bourgeois ideology which have pervaded it and the contemporary Arab social structure. According to Muruwwa, this new understanding will reveal the historical dimensions of the present Arab revolutionary movement and will show that Arab authenticity agrees with modernity and interacts with it, thus dispelling the incorrect notion of their being contradictory to each other, which Western imperialist thought and Arab bourgeois thought have propagated.[93] The Arab present will thus be seen as a movement of becoming, in which the achievements of the past and the possibilities of the future interact dynamically and move developmentally forward. The past heritage will no more be characterized by metaphysical, idealistic and fatalistic qualities in which Arab-Islamic society seems lacking human will and creativity, and thus merely reflecting the present-day ideology of the Arab bourgeoisies controlled by that of the imperialists. It will rather be a living heritage, throbbing with the movement of history, as thought will be shown to be related to the movement of Arab-Islamic society with all its contradictions and social-ideological conflicts in which human forces alone make history through human will and within specific societal conditions.[94]

Muruwwa proceeds along these lines to give an account of Arab thought, beginning in pre-Islamic Arabia and moving

through the rise of Islam to the advent of the caliphates of the Rāshidūn, the Umayyads and the cAbbasids, discussing the intellectual content of the Arab-Islamic theological, philosophical and Sufi discourse of the various schools and sects as an embodiment of the changing societal conditions, but also always allowing thought a certain measure of relative autonomy with regard to political, social and economic factors.

To give an example of Muruwwa's treatment, I will refer to his Marxist analysis of the history and doctrines of the Muc-tazila.[95] To start with, he situates the beginnings of this rationalist theological movement in the thick of the political conflict of the Muslim community over the legitimacy of the caliphate of the Umayyads. He relates the movement to the earlier religio-political debate on whether or not one who commits a grave sin (kabīra) continues to be a believer. The Khārijīs maintained that such a person was an unbeliever, since they coupled faith with good deeds, while the Murji'īs argued that he continued to be a believer, since they considered faith to be an internal matter unrelated to deeds and accordingly the final decision was God's, and human opinion regarding this matter should be suspended. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728) considered the grave sinner to be a hypocrite (munāfiq) because his faith was not perfect since he said or did something and secretly believed in something else, and thus deserved the punishment due an unbeliever. Wāṣil ibn cAṭā' (d. 748), on the other hand, considered such a person to be iniquitous (fāsiq), a believer doctrinally speaking but one who did not obey the Sharīca, his position being intermediate between that of a believer and an unbeliever (al-manzila bayn al-manzilatayn). The Muctazila adopted the latter doctrine of the intermediate position for political reasons, since at the bottom of the question was whether Mucāwiya, as avenger of cUthmān's murderers and as his successor, was a believer and hence a legitimate caliph, as opposed to cAlī, who succeeded cUthmān as caliph after the latter's murder. The relative autonomy of thought in these societal matters exhibited itself in the manner in which the Muctazila conceptualized the issue at hand and developed it into a general abstract doctrine about the grave sinner, rather than keeping it particularized in specific persons or times.

Muruwwa subjects the other four doctrines of the Muctazila to detailed content analysis in the light of societal conditions

and relates them to the prevalent intellectual debate as well as to the socio-economic and political development of Muslim society. He accepts the influence of external factors on the Muᶜtazila, such as Greek, Persian or Indian thought and Christian theology, but he shows how the necessities of the internal factors shaped their doctrines by a process of innovative assimilation that responded to the perceived needs of their own Muslim society.

In all this intellectual development, Muruwwa observes that over long periods there is a quantitative accumulation of factors that leads eventually to a qualitative transformation in accordance with Marxist theory. He considers the successive events that followed Prophet Muḥammad's death as quantitative accumulations beginning with the conflict over who should be caliph, and going on to the conflict over the material gains of ᶜUthmān's supporters, then reaching a climax in the civil war between ᶜAlī and Muᶜāwiya. All these quantitative accumulations led to a qualitative transformation which initially expressed itself politically in the rise of the Umayyad state, supported by socio-economic transformation and eventually giving rise to an intellectual transformation. As time went on, the new order soon began to exhibit internal contradictions within the relations of production and the political hegemony of the Umayyad state, creating new quantitative accumulations that grew rife in Caliph ᶜAbd al-Malik's rule and eventually sought various qualitative transformations in the political, social and intellectual spheres, sometimes accompanied by armed revolts,[96] and culminating in the rise of the ᶜAbbasids.

Muruwwa opines that theological discourse (ᶜilm al-kalām) began with the question of predestination as an intellectual form of qualitative transformation resulting from the accumulation of social disaffection among groups of mawālī (non-Arab clients), land workers, small landowners and bands of slaves working on the land or in the public services, and numerous poor people in the cities including small wage earners and employees of crafts shops. While social disaffection expressed itself in occasional armed revolts with class struggle undertones, the intellectuals were expressing it theologically, protesting the absolute Umayyad political and economic hegemony and its deterministic ideology, and they were teaching that human will

was free and man was not predestined. Other topics were eventually included in the discourse, such as the question of the grave sinner, be his sin political or otherwise, and the question of God's transcendence, unity and justice.[97] The Muᶜtazila were the intellectuals who built up a unified theological system reflecting all these concerns.

Muruwwa explains that although the early Muᶜtazila constituted theological opposition to the Umayyad caliphate, they were later in favor with the ᶜAbbasid Caliph al-Ma'mūn and his two successors who supported them. He observes that the social forces that brought al-Ma'mūn to power in his struggle with his brother al-Amīn were those representing city economy and its mercantile society based on trade, banking, the crafts and the innovative thinking of liberal intellectuals. Although the social groups in the growing Iraqi cities were people of mixed ethnic origins and of various economic classes, their interests as a whole were opposed to the conservative rich owners of feudal lands in the countryside and their agricultural agents who supported al-Amīn. The Muᶜtazila, among whom were many men of non-Arab origin, were in the ascendancy with al-Ma'mūn and his successors until the socio-economic conditions changed, whereupon another theological school, the Ashᶜarī school, formally rationalist but ideologically conservative, came eventually to the fore to express the view of another dominant political force.[98]

Muruwwa admits that his attempt is not more than laying the preparatory foundation to a full study of this matter in the light of the method of historical materialism, because he had nothing to guide him but a few socio-economic indicators and the general rules of social dialectic.[99] However, his efforts in generally relating Arab thought to societal conditions, as he understood them to be from the limited data, are commendable though not always precise and exact. He has been correctly criticized by Arab thinkers, some of whom are Marxists, for his inclination to abstraction and to ready schematization.[100] He has also been justly criticized for lack of correct or honest documentation and for his summary generalizations and categorical conclusions not fully justified.[101] But his work, by all accounts, is respected for its courage and its breadth of vision.[102]

Hasan Hanafī's work is another massive project of heritage study that is respected for a different kind of courage and broad in treatment. His project entitled *al-Turāth wa-l-Tajdīd* (Heritage and Renewal) is still in its early stages, since only an introduction has been published,[103] to be followed by several planned volumes on three areas of relevant study: the first (in eight volumes) on the required attitude of the Arabs to their own heritage, the second (in five volumes) on their required attitude to the Western heritage and the third (in three volumes) on a new hermeneutical theory that reconstructs human culture on a global scale (mainly Judeo-Christian and Islamic) and rehabilitates a reconstructed Arab heritage within it as the foundation for mankind in a modern world existentially liberated from alienation and given a comprehensive program of positive action. Hanafī's earlier writings, even as he himself views them,[104] all contribute to his project, which he considers to be that of his lifetime. Hence it is possible to study his project before it is completed.

As in the case of many other Arab thinkers, Hasan Hanafī's point of departure is the Arab present and the necessity of solving its problems and putting an end to all that deters its development. The heritage in itself has no value to him except inasmuch as it is a means that can give the Arab nation a theory of action in the reconstruction of man and his relation with the world.[105] What is needed first and foremost, in his opinion, before any industrial, agricultural, or political revolution can succeed in the Arab world, is a human revolution that rebuilds the new man.

As Hanafī sees it, the Arab present is permeated with values of the past heritage. Its institutions and structures are an embodiment of that heritage. And since the heritage, in his view, is not merely manuscripts or books that have come down to contemporary Arabs, but all the interpretations that every past generation has given to them in response to its needs, he believes the heritage is not made up of eternal truths and immutable doctrines but of specific realizations of certain beliefs and attitudes under particular historical circumstances.[106] Being neither material stock stored up in libraries and museums, nor a conceptual theoretical entity independent of historical reality, the heritage to him is thus a psychological store of influences from the past pervading the Arab masses and forming part of Arab reality.[107]

It is this affective aspect of the heritage, i.e., its emotive power to influence conscience and behavior among the masses, that gives Hanafī the motivation to study the heritage—not in order to defend it, as he says, but in order to study the present through it and identify the negative elements of weakness and backwardness in it and eliminate them, and in order to emphasize the positive elements of strength and authenticity in it and make them the basis of a contemporary Arab *nahḍa* leading to change and progress.[108]

Hanafī's project proposes to rethink all the basic questions posed in the past, the answers to which have constituted the heritage of the contemporary Arabs, and then to select from all the valid, possible solutions those that respond to the requirements of the present age. He does not agree with the traditionalists who believe the heritage has given all the correct answers once and for all, nor with the modernizers who ignore the heritage and rush into programs of modernization in various fields, building the new beside the old or even on top of its decrepit structures. Nor does he agree with those who attempt to reconcile the heritage with modernity or those who attempt to reconcile modernity to the heritage, eclectically choosing elements from one or the other with a prepondering bias against one or the other, and without a view to the logical structure of the whole and its viability among people imbued with a psychological store of complex influences from the past.[109]

Hanafī considers the intellectual heritage of Islamic civilization to be essentially based on divine revelation recorded in one book, the Qur'ān. For him, Islamic civilization itself is nothing but an attempt at a methodical, intellectual presentation of this revelation to the world in a specific historical period and under specific socio-cultural circumstances. The revelation per se is not an issue in his opinion since the Qur'ān is an unquestionably authentic, historical document untouched by corruption or alteration of any kind and verifiably sincere and truthful, judging from its effect, in human experience, on initiating change and giving the world ideal structures leading to perfection. What is at issue in his view is the manner in which this revelation has been interpretively presented and the theoretical structures which have informed the presentation.[110] Not that this presentation and the structures are necessarily wrong, for Hanafī's claim is that they are only the result of specific

historical circumstances in which Muslims chose particular solutions, among many others that were possible, in order to respond to the needs of their time. Thus, for example, if the old Islamic theory is studied today as part of the Arab heritage, the purpose for him is not merely to study raw texts or to declare certain wanting theologians of the past as unbelievers, but rather to illuminate the genesis and development of theological ideas arising from their first origins in revelation, and to note their response to the need of the time for a theorization of reality and for a conceptual foundation explicating the events of the day on the basis of an inherited source, pure reason, or the requirements of reality. This response may have been to conditions internal to the Islamic community and it may have been to attacks external to it. In all cases, Ḥanafī affirms, Islamic theology should be analyzed for its lopsided solutions, its important though conditional conclusions, and its intricate methods and arguments related to its historical times. But then the analysis should be continued and should reach the present day in order to encompass the few modern attempts at theological renewal and make Muslims aware of the necessity for a new and more comprehensive approach that will adequately answer today's questions which are necessarily different and require new methods of presentation, though the old subjects will remain valid.[111]

With the Qur'ān and the Prophet's Sunna at the center of Islamic civilization, Ḥanafī proposes to review all Islamic intellectual disciplines that make up the Arab cultural heritage. He says that there are Islamic disciplines only marginally related to the religious axis of the Arab heritage, such as mathematics and physics, as well as certain aspects of what is now called the humanities and social sciences like geography, history, linguistics, literature, psychology, sociology, ethics, politics, economics, logic and aesthetics. But he believes they have all contributed to form the Islamic world view and should, therefore, be shown to be grounded in the divine revelation, which should thus be rightly seen as the most comprehensive human science.[112] As for the religious sciences that arose to control the correctness of the text of revelation and to interpret it, some of them were temporary sciences which fulfilled their function and came to an end, such as certain Qur'anic and Ḥadīth sciences

dealing with variant readings and the authentication of oral sources; some others among those sciences need to be developed further to explore any new significance they may have for the present age and its needs, and they include Qur'ān exegesis (tafsīr), law (fiqh) and the Prophet's biography (Sīra).[113]

But there are four intellectual Islamic disciplines to which Ḥanafī pays greater attention and they are: (1) theology (ᶜilm al-kalām or uṣūl al-dīn), (2) philosophy (falsafa), (3) jurisprudence (uṣūl al-fiqh) and (4) Sufism (taṣawwuf).[114] Ḥanafī maintains that all of them are inspired by the Qur'ān and the Sunna and he deals with them in some detail for a dual purpose:

(a) to establish their provenance as disciplines related to divine revelation on the one hand, and to specific conditions of their times on the other;

(b) to reconstruct them within a new and comprehensive cultural system that responds to the conditions and needs of the modern age.

Ḥanafī does not believe that any of these disciplines owes its existence, or at least its beginnings, to cultures outside Islamic civilization. For Islamic theology, in his opinion, was the first attempt by Muslims to find a purely rational theory for their religious text, its function being to consolidate the doctrine and, later, to defend its world view against internal sectarian dissension or other religions within Islamic territory. Islamic philosophy, in his view, was a wider and more comprehensive rational attempt by Muslims, its function being to transform the Muslim theological conceptions into general theories of the universe in order to deal with foreign, especially Greek, philosophical theories by using their linguistic tools and rational methods. Islamic jurisprudence was perhaps the earliest intellectual discipline the Muslims attempted, its earliest function being, according to Ḥanafī, the rationalization of the process of deriving new legal prescriptions for acts not prescribed in the Qur'ān or the Sunna, and its result was the establishment of an Islamic method of theorization of reality and community behavior.[115] Sufism, as he explains, arose out of the needs of certain Muslims who did not want to share positively in the political turmoil of the Islamic community and devoted themselves in

seclusion to spiritual enhancement and, later, developed a distinctive orientation in interpreting the revealed text based for the most part on the heart and on feeling, and only to a limited degree on reason.

Ḥanafī argues that all these Islamic disciplines have been perverted through generations of ignorance so that, in modern times, Arabs lack the depth of intellectual insight and emotive experience which these disciplines reflect as evidence of their free encounter with the sacred text of revelation. In his view, most Arabs now live a superficial, superstitious religious life and lead an impoverished spiritual existence, close-minded to anything but their captivity to the literal understanding of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. They are without any imaginative, comprehensive vision that experiences the whole universe and conceives of it as God's, and are internecinely divided into mutually exclusive views based on vulgar knowledge or material interests.

Ḥanafī's project aims at reconstructing, unifying and integrating all the Islamic civilizational sciences in the light of modern needs, making of them an ideology for modern man by which he lives a full and perfect life. Man and history, the two invisible dimensions of the old Arab heritage, absorbed as they have been in the divine, will be revealed as being at the center of modern consciousness in a reconstructed Islamic world view based on revelation which, in his opinion, is the logic of existence.[116]

In addition, Ḥanafī proposes to reconstruct the heritage of Western culture, which he characterizes as a purely historical culture in which divine revelation has ceased to be central except by inertia, his aim being to show its limitation and provincialism, and to refute its claim to universality and leadership, and thus to reduce Europe and its culture to what he terms its natural size within world culture.[117]

In all this, Ḥanafī sees himself as bearing the torch unto a new age of Enlightenment (tanwīr), using rationalism but at the same time not ignoring the fund of human feeling. Holding in great esteem Marxist analysis as used in Latin American liberation theology, he sees himself as a spearhead of a new Islamic Left[118] aiming at improving the life of the crushed Arab masses by making them regain their identity and shed their alienation and rid themselves of all that deters development, better stan-

dards of living and self-determination while developing a new Islamic theology of man. He sees himself as a philosopher with a new hermeneutic that combines an innovative understanding of Islam, Marxism and phenomenology and creates a revolutionary ideology that gives people everywhere a theory of action and behavior leading to change, progress and fulfillment based on revelation.

In spite of his great efforts, I believe Ḥanafī overestimates the ability of his encyclopedic endeavor to change the Arab world, let alone the Third World or the whole world and let alone how much real scholarship one single person can command. His project is inordinately cerebral and too theoretical to be practical in the real world. Although he repeatedly refers to the importance of social reality, his project dangerously skirts the material basis of this reality and is essentially predicated on the prior necessity of spiritual reconstruction, thus ignoring the dialectical relation between matter and spirit, between reality and thought. Besides, wishful thinking does not create reality. Ḥanafī's voice, however, should be taken into consideration as the rising Arab chorus builds up, calling for a new vision of the future.

If Ḥanafī's approach is admittedly ideological, Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī's is the most serious attempt in the Arab world to go beyond ideology to epistemology in order to analyze the workings of the Arab mind.

In his book Naḥnu wa-l-Turāth: Qirā'āt Muʿāṣira fī Turāthinā l-Falsafī (We and the Heritage: Contemporary Readings in Our Philosophical Heritage),[119] al-Jābirī maintains a procedural distinction between the epistemological and the ideological content of Arab-Islamic philosophy. He deems this distinction particularly useful whenever the epistemological and the ideological elements of an intellectual structure do not form a single entity but rather belong to two different worlds. In the case of Arab-Islamic philosophy, al-Jābirī believes that its epistemological content (i.e., science and metaphysics) belongs to a different intellectual universe which is primarily the space of Greek thought, and that its ideological content belongs to the space of Arab-Islamic thought which is related to the sociopolitical conflicts in which it developed. The function of philosophy in Islamic civilization was, according to al-Jābirī, the

employment of the Greek epistemological content to serve the ideological aims of one party or the other in the Arab-Islamic conflicts. Whether he was discussing the religious and political philosophy of al-Fārābī, or the oriental philosophy of Ibn Sīnā, or the theory of Ibn Rushd regarding the relation of religion and philosophy or aspects of the thought of Ibn Bājja or Ibn Khaldūn, al-Jābirī turned his attention mainly to their ideological content to show the partisan Arab and Islamic elements that colored their philosophy, and to highlight the Arab-Islamic societal conflicts reflected in it.

However, when studying Arab thought in the modern period, al-Jābirī concentrates on its logical structure and epistemological foundations because he does not want to explore its historical and intellectual relation to its social conditions as he did when studying Arab-Islamic philosophy, but rather to discover why, since the beginnings of the Arab *nahḍa* in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, Arab thought to date has not seemed to be making any significant progress but has appeared to him to be going in circles. In his book *al-Khiṭāb al-ʿArabī al-Muʿāṣir: Dirāsa Taḥlīliyya Naqdiyya* (The Contemporary Arab Discourse: A Critical Analytical Study),[120] he approaches the major intellectual concerns of the Arab thinkers in the past hundred years with the purpose of discovering how they thought, not what they thought. He applies himself to the study of the general cultural discourse first and the Arab perception of modernity and tradition. He then moves to the modern political discourse in which Arab perceptions of religion and state, democracy and nationalism play a big role. After that, he studies the nationalist discourse and analyzes Arab perceptions of unity and socialism, and pays particular attention to the Arab perceptions of the liberation of Palestine and its role in the Arab intellectual discourse. Finally, he moves to the modern philosophical discourse and studies Arab perceptions of the achievements of past Arab philosophers and analyzes the formulations of present-day philosophers in the Arab world who want to present a contemporary Arab philosophy. In all these investigations covering intellectuals from Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, ʿAlī ʿAbd al-Rāziq and Rashīd Riḍā to Ḥasan Ṣaʿb, Anwar ʿAbd al-Malik, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī and Zakī Najīb Maḥmūd passing through Sayyid Quṭb,

Michel ʿAflaq, ʿAbd Allāh ʿAbd al-Dāʾim and Salāma Mūsā in addition to many others, al-Jābirī discerns an Arab mind that is still going in vicious circles, having achieved no significant progress in any of the issues it has dealt with in the past hundred years. He notes that there is a basic problematic structural character to the Arab mind which pervades all its intellectual endeavors, and that is its proneness to always give referential authority to a past-model (*namūdhaj-salaf*). He argues that the Arab mind does not depart from reality to build up a particular trend of thought, but rather works from a past-model which constantly deters it and keeps it from facing reality and consequently diverts its discourse into dealing with what is intellectually possible as if it were a real fact. Resort to a past-model makes memory, and hence the emotional and the irrational, take the place of reason. Al-Jābirī says:

> Modern and contemporary Arab discourse is in truth a discourse of memory, not a discourse of reason; it is a discourse which does not speak in the name of a conscious self that possesses independence and enjoys complete personality, but rather one which speaks in the name of a referential authority that employs memory and not reason. This is very serious, because intellectual concepts in this condition are not related to the reality of which the discourse speaks but rather to another reality which establishes the past-model in the consciousness as the directing, referential authority.[121]

In other words, al-Jābirī says that the intellectual concepts of modern and contemporary Arab discourse do not reflect actual Arab reality, and that they are, rather, borrowed. What complicates matters further is that those concepts are, in his view, either borrowed from medieval Arab-Islamic thought in which they had a specific real (or imagined) content, or else they are borrowed from European thought in which they designate a foreign reality that has been achieved in Europe (or is in the process of being achieved). In both cases, and whether the past-model is Arab-Islamic or European, the intellectual concepts of the Arab discourse are using a rather unclear and obscure, copied "reality" in order to give expression to an indefinite, hoped-for "reality." Thus, there is a break between Arab thought and its object. For example, if Arab thinkers use an in-

tellectual concept such as _shūrā_, i.e., consultation, borrowed from medieval Arab-Islamic thought, or if they use an intellectual concept such as _proletariat_, borrowed from modern European thought, in both cases they are using indefinite borrowed concepts that cannot have the same meaning or content in their present-day Arab reality as they did in their original usage, because of objective contextual difference. Nonetheless, Arab thinkers use such concepts and many others in order to give expression to what they hope will be Arab reality and the result is confused thinking that is ridden by contradictions because it cannot be related to an objective, actual reality but rather to a memory which is easily colored by emotional and wishful thinking that makes the possible appear to be real.

Of course every ideology has an epistemological (objective) side to it and an ideological (subjective) side, the former expressing socio-political and cultural reality as a result of a more-or-less scientific analysis of it, the latter expressing biased interests, desires and aspirations. In contemporary Arab ideology, according to al-Jābirī, the two sides do not coincide because the epistemological does not express Arab reality, and does not even reflect it or enter into a direct or indirect relation with it. Its referential framework, vague as it may be, is a reality other than contemporary Arab reality. Its referential framework is medieval Arab or modern European reality. Its concepts function basically as a cover-up and compensation for the epistemological deficiency of contemporary Arab discourse, hence its dogmatic character which is not amenable in argument to logical reference to reality but to further ideological tenacity and make-believe.[122]

It follows from this that differences and disagreements among Arab thinkers are not reflections of varying interpretations of contemporary Arab reality, but reflections of the differing and disagreeing referential authorities of each, namely the past-model each adopts and interprets, be it medieval Arab or modern European. Obsessed by the necessity of a past-model external to present-day Arab reality, intellectual activity takes the shape of jurisprudential analogy which, when entrenched in the mechanism of thinking, limits the intellect to a search for a past-model to every new thing with the aim of reconciling the new to the past-model. Thus thought becomes increasingly far-

ther from reality, a prisoner of discourse and not its master. As a result, it considers what is possible and what is real as equal, and it treats what is intellectually possible as if it were a given fact.[123]

These, then, in al-Jābirī's view, are the four basic characteristics of modern and contemporary Arab discourse: (1) the dominance of the past-model, (2) the entrenchment of the mechanism of jurisprudential analogy, (3) the treatment of what is intellectually possible as given facts and (4) the use of the ideological to cover up the deficiency of the epistemological in the knowledge of reality. These characteristics are structurally interrelated and, whether considered cause or effect, they are related to the lack in contempoary Arab personality of what Gramsci called "complete historical independence," or rather they are related to the Arab inability to achieve such independence.

Since having such independence is necessary for Arab liberation from any model and from any concomitant analogical thinking, al-Jābirī suggests that Arabs should achieve it by liberating themselves from the referential authority of both the Arab-Islamic model and the European model, i.e., the referential authority of the Arab-Islamic heritage and of Western culture and thought. He explains that this does not mean the heritage should be disposed of (which is impossible) but that it should be fully possessed by being critically studied then transcended: it must be reconstructed through a rearrangement of the relations of its components to one another on the one hand, and through a rearrangement of the relation of the Arabs to it on the other. This would restore to it its historicity and the relativity of its concepts and categories in the Arab mind so that the past in Arab consciousness should no longer be a focal element of its present problematic. Similarly, al-Jābirī explains that his approach does not mean that Western culture and thought should be emotionally ignored or wishfully declared to be declining and disintegrating or morally dismissed as evil,[124] but rather that Arabs should enter into a critical dialogue with Western culture by understanding its historicity and the relativity of its concepts and categories and by learning the foundations of the West's advancement based on science and critical rationality, which the Arabs must implant in their own culture and thought.[125] Furthermore, al-

Jābirī insists on the necessity of the conscious presence of Arab identity as a personality with distinctive history and uniqueness as well as with contradictions and a specific development. A necessary point of departure for the practice of self-criticism is the Arabs' awareness of themselves as a product of historical development, as al-Jābirī says in agreement with Gramsci. The image which the Arabs have forged of themselves, their past and their future, in the last hundred years since the *nahḍa*, is an image influenced partly by the challenge of Western culture and partly by the Arab reaction to this challenge, an image drawn by a passive, not an active, self. This image should now be corrected by a critique of the Arab mind, not merely since the faulty beginnings of the *nahḍa*, but since the formative beginnings of Arab culture as recorded in the early centuries of Islamic history.[126]

It is for this reason that al-Jābirī wrote his two-volume book *Naqd al-ᶜAql al-ᶜArabī* (Critique of the Arab Mind), the first volume of which appeared in 1984 under the title of *Takwīn al-ᶜAql al-ᶜArabī* (The Formation of the Arab Mind)[127] and concentrates on the early development of the epistemological structure of Arab learned culture, i.e., on the mechanism of the production of Arab thought. The second volume, which appeared in 1986 under the title of *Bunyat al-ᶜAql al-ᶜArabī: Dirāsa Taḥlīliyya Naqdiyya li-Nuẓum al-Maᶜrifa fī-l-Thaqāfa al-ᶜArabiyya* (Structure of the Arab Mind: A Critical Analytical Study of the Systems of Knowledge in Arab Culture),[128] continues al-Jābirī's discussion in a detailed study of the Arab epistemological systems that have been operative in Arab culture.

Al-Jābirī's aim in both volumes is to analyze the epistemological systems of Arab-Islamic culture as methods of perceiving reality. In this endeavor, he sees the various intellectual disciplines of this culture as interconnected rooms in a single palace and not as secluded independent tents in an open space, as the prevalent view may suggest. Following Michel Foucault, he recognizes the essentially political nature of culture (any culture) in which cultural hegemony is the primary, if not the only, aim of every social force—political, religious or otherwise; hence in Arab-Islamic culture, the organic conflictual relation between the ideological and the epistemological, which gives it its

historicity. Al-Jābirī also recognizes the undercurrents of counter-culture as part of the whole, including the irrational and esoteric elements, since both culture and counter-culture developed and defined themselves in relation to each other.

For al-Jābirī, the most important period in the history of Arab-Islamic culture to date is the age of recording (*ᶜaṣr al-tadwīn*), when the knowledge prevalent in the middle of the second century of the Islamic era began to be systematically written down by Arab scholars.[129] Though there had been earlier individual recordings dating back to the Prophet's time and that of the early Caliphs, they were sporadic, unorganized, limited in scope and not given the formal support of the state and the community. The age of recording stretched under the ᶜAbbasids for over a century, during which much of the oral tradition of the Arabs and of Islam was collected, translations from non-Arab cultures made and the systems of Arab-Islamic thought established. Al-Jābirī argues that this recording inevitably had the unconscious stamp of its own age, particularly when it referred to pre-Islamic Arabia, early Islam, and most of the Umayyad period. In fact, it was a reconstruction of Arab-Islamic culture and has ever since been its foundation and its referential framework.

In studying the intellectual contributions of Arab-Islamic thinkers in the formative period such as al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad,[130] al-Shāfiᶜī,[131] al-Ashᶜarī[132] and others who were essential in establishing the interconnected intellectual foundations in philology, legal theory and theology, al-Jābirī, while conceding their genius, attempts to show that they were establishing limits for reason by emphasizing the necessity, in their systems, of reference to past models and the analogical authority of past patterns and texts. In studying the intellectual contributions of the great Sufi and Shīᶜa thinkers and of esoteric thought generally in Arab-Islamic civilization,[133] al-Jābirī argues that reason in their systems resigned its duty, mostly under the influence of the Hermetic tradition and in opposition to the dominant established culture. In studying the intellectual contributions of the great Arab-Islamic philosophers al-Kindī, al-Fārābī,[134] Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī[135] and others, al-Jābirī concludes that their rational approach was either governed by societal considerations (mainly political as in al-Kindī's case and

al-Ghazālī's), or tainted with the esoteric gnostic influence of the resigned intellect (mainly Hermetic as in al-Fārābī's case, ibn Sīnā's and al-Ghazālī's). With al-Ghazālī, the Arab mind reached a crisis which was reflected in his personal life and withdrawal from politico-intellectual pursuits, and which continues to this day to be reflected in many contemporary Arab thinkers.[136]

Only in the Andalusian and Maghribi intellectual experience does al-Jābirī see a temporary exception to the workings elsewhere of the Arab mind under the influence of the resigned intellect or of the epistemology dependent on analogy and past models. In the thought of Ibn Ḥazm, Ibn Tūmart, Ibn Bājja and Ibn Rushd[137] he recognizes the insistence on reason and sense-experience as sources for the production of knowledge not contradicting Revelation, and he sees an opposition to imitation (taqlīd) and analogical thinking (qiyās) in an attempt at a new cultural construction. He relates this exception to the political desire of the authorities in Andalus and the Maghrib for independence from the power structures in the Mashriq and the thought systems they supported. He excludes from this experience Ibn Masarra, Abū Midyan, Ibn ʿArabī and other Sufis of the West who consecrated what al-Jābirī calls the resigned intellect (al-ʿaql al-mustaqīl) already known in the East.

The general thesis of al-Jābirī is that Arab thought since the age of recording has been repeating itself, with little addition worth mentioning, because of its unconscious epistemological structure, which did not allow for movement from one intellectual stage to another, whereby the latter would transcend the former by negating and abolishing it, preserving only what was useful and renewable in it as a foundation for addition and development based on experience and need. Any apparent movement in Arab thought has been motion in the same place and in the same cultural time, motion of conflict and interpenetration between the three established epistemological systems which have been its basis. These systems in al-Jābirī's scheme, which are still operative today, are:

(1) The disciplines of explication (ʿulūm al-bayān) based on an epistemological method which applies analogical thinking and produces knowledge analogically by subjecting the unknown to the known, the unseen to the seen, the new to a past-model. This method pervades

the earliest of all Arab-Islamic disciplines, which include grammar, rhetoric, prosody, philology, lexicography, Qur'ān exegesis, Ḥadīth sciences, Islamic law and legal theory, theology (kalām).

(2) The disciplines of gnosticism (ʿulūm al-ʿirfān), based on inner revelation and insight as an epistemological method, and including Sufism, Shīʿī thought, Ismāʿīlī philosophy, esoteric Qur'ān exegesis, oriental illumination philosophy, theosophy, alchemy, astrology, magic, numerology.

(3) Disciplines of inferential evidence (ʿulūm al-burhān) based on an epistemological method of empirical observation and intellectual inference. They include logic, mathematics, physics (all branches of natural sciences) and even metaphysics.[138]

Al-Jābirī argues that the subject of the Arab-Islamic cultural discourse in the disciplines of explication was the text which, unlike nature—the subject of ancient Greek thought and modern European thought—had limitations which exhausted all possibilities of intellectual progress after a certain time in the age of recording, leaving only a closed circle of repetitious motion governed by rules limiting the intellect itself.[139] As for the disciplines of gnosis, al-Jābirī believes they lead to no intellectual and societal progress by the very nature of their concern. In the disciplines of inferential evidence, the Arab-Islamic cultural discourse was mostly dominated and vitiated by the political desire of defeating gnosticism and thus achieved limited progress, although in the field of strictly empirical practice it achieved real progress, as in algebra (al-Khawārizmī), optics (Ibn al-Haytham), astronomy (al-Baṭrūjī) and other natural sciences completely outside the political struggle in Arab culture.[140] These and similar empirical Arab achievements were continued by Europe after the Renaissance, as al-Jābirī asserts; but the modern European experience avoided the error of the ancient Greek experience and did not limit itself, as did the Greeks, to an intellectual dialectic which scorned experiment but rather built natural science on it and constructed technical instruments which were constantly improved with the advance of science and which affected this very advance itself positively,

establishing an open-ended dialectical relationship between science and technology in the study of nature. European philosophy then broke with theology and entered a new phase related to science.[141]

What al-Jābirī advocates is a similar Arab advance, following a reconstruction of the Arab-Islamic culture. His argument calls for a scientific historicizing of the Arab-Islamic heritage and a rational relativizing of its value, not in order to know the facts only, as is the purpose of the Orientalist philological project but in order to liberate contemporary Arab discourse from the influence of those facts and establish a new intellectual discourse for the Arab future.

While not ignoring the achievements of modern science and thought, this discourse, in his view, should be founded on those viable intellectual achievements of the Arab-Islamic heritage which are characterized by rationalist critical qualities usable in the epistemological structures of modern civilization. For al-Jābirī, these viable intellectual achievements are basically in the disciplines of inferential evidence (ᶜulūm al-burhān), particularly as developed since the fifth century A.H./eleventh century A.D. in Andalus and the Maghrib by such great creative thinkers as Ibn Ḥazm, al-Shāṭibī, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldūn, whose contributions in the direction of new epistemological structures and methodologies have not been adopted by the prevalent Arab-Islamic culture but have rather been all but ignored. The Arab mind has to renew and modernize itself if it is not to continue ruminating the old issues in an endless alienation from contemporary reality. A new "age of recording" should be inaugurated in order to replace the old foundations upon which traditional Arab-Islamic culture has been built.[142]

According to al-Jābirī, there is no final answer to the question of how Arabs should practice renovation and modernization from within their own heritage, because the answer is a continuously growing and renewed answer, gradually emerging from within that historical process of the practice itself, not before it, not above it and not outside it.[143]

Al-Jābirī's contribution to the contemporary Arab debate on the heritage is very clever, learned and thought-provoking. Its limitation, however, is that it is intellectual and, as such, can only benefit a small elite. Nonetheless, it is progressive and

hopeful, and it leaves no doubt about the necessity for much hard work still lying ahead.

One of the latest serious efforts to study the problem of the Arab-Islamic heritage and the challenges of modernity was the symposium organized by the Center for Arab Unity Studies, a private social sciences research and publishing institute in Beirut established in 1977 whose director-general is Khayr al-Dīn Ḥasīb. The symposium was held in Cairo between September 24 and 27, 1984 and was attended by about one hundred participants representing the younger, as well as the older, intellectuals of the Arab world and included two non-Arab scholars: Yasumasa Kuroda who spoke on Japanese modernization and Satish Shandra who, by proxy, spoke on change and development in India. The proceedings of the symposium were published in 1985,[144] and included fourteen invited research papers, each followed by several commentators (except for one which arrived late), and each followed by discussions from the floor. To conclude the symposium there was one session of open discussion on the Arab future in the context of the general theme of the meeting.

I believe that the symposium has successfully contributed to the clarification of the intellectual trends in the Arab world today, some of which have been presented in this chapter. It also demonstrated the absolute necessity of continued free intellectual dialogue (rather than mutual exclusion) between conflicting views in order to reach a solution to the major issues confronting Arab society. There was insufficient discussion of the international order and how the Arabs should relate to it so that their economic dependency on it might be reduced while accepting its inevitable presence and reciprocal effectiveness. The symposium allowed a discourse among Arab intellectuals, and discussion occurred on issues relating to the Arab-Islamic heritage, social justice, the political order, Islam and the cultural question of modernization. But little was said about how intellectuals might seek union with the Arab masses, from whom they have been widely separated, nor was much said about Arab women or about ethnic and religious minorities in the Arab world and their place in the new order to be. Furthermore, the symposium did not offer practical ways by which the intellectuals might be able to synthesize their approaches and transform them into policies to be followed by Arab governments.

The symposium has eminently demonstrated that there is an intellectual crisis in the Arab world, indicated not only by the lack of consensus but also by the lack of an acceptable method to reach consensus with regard to Arab culture in the modern world. Political repression and the tenuous legitimization of political power are other indicators of the crisis. They are also factors in prolonging its duration and deepening its dimensions.

Chapter Three

The Modern Relevance of Islam and the Qur'ān

That Islam is an inalienable component of Arab culture is not only a historical fact of the greatest significance, but it is also a socio-psychological factor that continues to this very day to be of the utmost importance on the existential level. Secularistic Arab modernists who have ignored this truth or made light of it have continuously seen their projects dashed on its reality. More recent Arab modernizers have begun to accept this truth, though many thinkers among them disagree with regard to the extent it should be allowed to dominate the modernizing process.

Against a background of rising Islamic resurgence, typified intellectually by a Muslim Arab thinker like Sayyid Qutb of Egypt, this chapter will attempt to portray the thought of other Muslim Arab writers who, while recognizing the absolute need for Islam in modern Arab society, have opted for varying liberal interpretations of it which they deem more suitable to the present age than the traditional ones. Of those thinkers, I will concentrate on some of the writings of Muḥammad al-Nuwayhī, Ḥasan Ṣaᶜb, Muḥammad ᶜAmāra and Muḥammad Arkūn (Mohammed Arkoun).

Let us first begin with Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) whose writings in several printings have become very popular after his death, including those posthumously published for the first time. A leading member of the Society of the Muslim Brothers, he is one of many Arab writers calling for a reconstruction of society along lines conforming to Islamic doctrines, his distinction being his powerful style and his latterly uncompromising insurgent attitude and bold frankness that led to his long incarceration and, eventually, to his trial and execution.[1]

One notices a radicalization of Quṭb's thought between the earliest of his book on this subject, al-ᶜAdāla al-Ijtimāᶜiyya fī-l-Islām (Social Justice in Islam)[2] published in Cairo in 1949, and the last before his death, Maᶜālim fī-l-Ṭarīq (Milestones)[3] published in Cairo in 1964, and passing through his thirty-volume work Fī Ẓilāl al-Qurān (In the Shade of the Qur'ān)[4] published in fascicules between 1952 and 1965, the first thirteen volumes of which he revised. His basic beliefs remain the same, but whereas in the earlier period he proposes the Islamic system of life as a better alternative to the prevailing nation-state systems or societies developing in the Arab world and elsewhere, in the later period he rejects those systems and societies, and condemns them as ungodly, un-Islamic and as part of what he begins to call the modern jāhiliyya.

This concept of modern jāhiliyya is pivotal in the understanding of Sayyid Quṭb's radical thought.[5] Jāhiliyya, as is well known, is the term used initially in the Qur'ān and later by Muslim historians and others to denote the pre-Islamic period prior to the divine revelation of the Qur'ān in the seventh century. In Sayyid Quṭb's writings, it ceases to be only a past, historical period of ignorance of God before Islam and becomes, in a pejorative usage, a human condition, a state of mind, a quality of society, a way of life whereby the Islamic system in any age or land is ignored and whereby human beings, even if they call themselves 'Muslims', deviate from the Islamic way prescribed by the Qur'ān and the Prophet's teachings.[6]

This usage of jāhiliyya, developed from the writings of Abū-l-Aᶜlā Mawdūdī (d. 1979), considers as evil many prevailing aspects of modern life, including those in the Arab world imitating Westerners or imbued with the values of the West, whether they are beliefs, customs, laws and institutions, or arts, literatures, philosophies or people's visions.[7] Apart from modern science and technology, deemed generally acceptable, most, if not all, other disciplines of intellectual pursuits, including the humanities and the social sciences, are considered in this view to be inimical to the general religious understanding of life and specifically to the Islamic world view.[8] In fact, there are only two kinds of culture in the world from this perspective: the Islamic culture and the jāhilī culture.[9] Between them, there is

constant struggle which is basically a struggle between belief and unbelief, between faith in God and polytheism.[10]

The Western way of life condemned by Sayyid Quṭb is not only that of the secular democracies of the West, whether capitalistic or socialistic, but also that of the communist nations, which he sees as basically established on atheistic propositions and the belief in materialism and economic determinism, thus reducing human life to the pursuit of food, drink, clothing, shelter and sex.[11] All these are jāhilī systems, in Quṭb's opinion, because they adopt human values apart from God's guidance as prescribed in the Qur'ān and detailed in the Sharīᶜa, and because they set up a purpose for life other than that of God. Jāhilī systems include also those of India, Japan and other Asian polytheistic systems, as well as African ones. Christian and Jewish communities are equally jāhilī because of their deviation from the revealed truth by allowing the political order in their countries to arrogate to itself powers to legislate what is right and wrong, and thus to trespass on God's exclusive domain.[12] Muslims who accept a similar political order, that operates apart from God's injunctions and introduces alien elements into the Islamic system, are similarly jāhilī.[13] The confession of Muslim faith, lā ilāha illā-llāh (There is no god but God), is a declaration daily repeated by Muslims that "there is no governance except that of God, there is no legislation but that of God, there is no sovereignty of anybody over others because all sovereignty belongs to God."[14] This is the ḥākimiyya (governance) of God which is the only antidote against jāhiliyya and its evils.

Sayyid Quṭb believes unequivocally in the superiority of the Islamic system over all others and in its ability to lead humanity to happiness, prosperity, peace and justice on earth in preparation for the hereafter. He believes Islam is good for all peoples, in all places and all times. He argues that the Islamic system has room for models compatible with the needs of different modern societies and their continuous change.[15] Though Islamic law, the Sharīᶜa, is immutable as prescribed in the Qur'an and the Prophet's teachings, its interpretation by human beings through the instrumentality of fiqh (jurisprudence) is flexible and responsive to modern needs and problems. Reinter-

pretation is thus possible, provided it remains within the encompassing intentions of the Sharīᶜa, so that human excesses are prevented and foreign cultural elements excluded.[16]

In order to implement the Islamic system in a modern world considered to be *jāhilī*, Quṭb advocates the emulation of the Prophet Muḥammad by adhering to his method when he led the first Islamic community from the ignorance of God and the social order of the *Jāhiliyya* to faith in God and the social order of Islam, which was resoundingly victorious after long struggle. The core of the future believing *umma* (community) is therefore a group of committed individuals, the *jamāᶜa*, who are dedicated as a vanguard (*ṭalīᶜa*) to the realization of the Islamic society and willing to separate themselves from unbelievers.[17] This *jamāᶜa* is the Party of God (*Ḥizb Allāh*) that becomes conscious of itself as it opposes all other groups or people who do not share its belief in God.[18] It separates itself from them in an act of *hijra* (dissociation) in order to consolidate the *jamāᶜa*, inculcate the faith, and prepare for the *jihād* (struggle). Victory comes after continuous and steadfast struggle with the unbelievers and the eventual establishment of a new political order that affirms God's sovereignty and implements His prescriptions.

Sayyid Quṭb does not specify the form of the Islamic political order or the limits of its geographical expression. But in his many writings, he has described the ideal characteristics of such an order. According to him, the Islamic political order is based on two fundamental ideas deriving from universality in conceiving of the world, life and man: (1) the idea of the unity of mankind as to race, nature and origin; and (2) the idea that Islam is an eternal system for the world, meant to continue throughout the future of mankind.[19] This political order, he affirms, rests on the basis of justice (*ᶜadl*) on the part of the rulers, obedience (*ṭāᶜa*) on the part of the ruled and consultation (*shūrā*) between the rulers and the ruled.[20] Whatever its form or name, it must fully implement the Sharīᶜa. He says:

> Every political system that implements the Islamic Sharīᶜa is an Islamic political system whatever its form or name. And every political system that does not implement the Sharīᶜa is not recognized by Islam, even though it is run by a religious [Islamic] hierarchy or bears an Islamic name.[21]

Sayyid Quṭb believes the Sharīᶜa to be the ideal system by which individuals and societies all over the world can prosper and live happily. The individual is liberated through it from servility to mundane values and fears, from dependence on any deity or person, and is totally committed to God and a just society that God instituted.[22] In this society, there is human equality and there is no discrimination against any believer because of race, gender or class. Distinctions between men and women in inheritance shares and in other legal matters prescribed in the Sharīᶜa are necessary, we are told, due to the dispositions of each based on the different biological functions which nature gave each, and the corresponding duties required of each as a consequence, but by no means do they constitute a detraction from the spiritual equality of men and women or from the human rights of the person guaranteed by the Sharīᶜa.[23] In this society also, there is mutual responsibility among its members and a common duty of social solidarity (*takāful ijtimāᶜī*).

For example, between an individual and his famiy there is an obligation of mutual support, and between the individual and his society there is a bond of cooperation for the benefit of the whole and the protection and well-being of the individual.[24] Quṭb concludes:

> [Islam] gives the individual full liberty within limits which do not harm him and do not obstruct the group. It also gives the group its rights and at the same time charges it with responsibilities in return for these rights, so that life may go on a straight and even path, and reach its higher goals which the individual and the group equally serve.[25]

Without going into further details of Sayyid Quṭb's view of Islamic society, it is clear that his thought is highly idealistic. It does not recognize that although an individual knows his duty, he may not necessarily perform it — even if he is continually exhorted. Neither historical evidence nor knowledge of human behavior supports the view that an idealistic plan for a system, however elaborate and thorough, does by itself or by exhortation guarantee its implementation in real concrete terms. The proof of that is Sayyid Quṭb's thought itself, which considers the modern age to be one of *jāhiliyya*, implying that after four-

teen centuries of Islam, even countries and societies whose people today call themselves Muslims are not truly Islamic.

Furthermore, it is evident that Sayyid Quṭb's thought is ahistoric, in that it does not recognize the factors of time and place in the development of Islam but rather presents it dogmatically as a monolithic and complete system from its inception. Disagreements among Muslims are therefore seen to be a result of their lack of faith or their deviation and perversity, rather than genuine human differences that are inevitably bound to appear, as they did in history even among sincere and pious Muslims, and especially in interpreting Islam as it moves through time and place. Thus, by excluding the possibility of pluralism among Muslims, let alone in a society where Muslims and non-Muslims live together, rational debate is excluded, and dogmatism is embraced — a fact which eventually leads to social fragmentation and likely violence because of difference of opinion.

The necessity for the freedom to express one's opinion has been emphasized by several modern Arab thinkers, but centuries of oppressive rule in pre-modern times and under colonial domination have left a legacy of distrust of government by the Arab people. Even among Arab intellectuals today, there is a certain reservation regarding the extent of free expression they as individuals feel they can afford before they arouse the wrath of the political authorities or the religious establishment. The increase of power that has been made available to contemporary Arab governments by their control of the mass media, the bureaucracy, the military and police forces through the mounting use of modern technology has made Arab intellectuals even more wary. Sayyid Quṭb himself — the bold, free spirit that he was — may be considered a victimized intellectual in ᶜAbd al-Nāṣir's Egypt, but his dogmatism is unfortunate and does not help to solve the problem of freedom in Arab countries. Free debate is an essential requisite of any desired progress in the Arab world or anywhere else.

The Egyptian scholar, Muḥammad al-Nuwayhī, has repeatedly argued that Arab intellectuals should rise to the leadership role that is their duty in public discourse. His condemnation of their diffidence in this respect goes as far as saying they are responsible, because of insufficient activity, for the

apathy of the Arab masses to a revolution in many traditional values and concepts that need to be changed. He asserts that change in the socio-economic and political spheres, which most Arab governments are bent on, does not by itself achieve societal transformation, if it is not accompanied by a conviction that the ethical values and concepts which support the old, traditional order are also in need of change.[26] And it is the Arab intellectuals who are capable of advocating a cultural revolution in this field, but they should be ready for a long and arduous battle against the coercion of government bureaucracies, reactionary forces in society and established interests.[27]

Al-Nuwayhī believes that a revolution in religious thought is essential for any comprehensive Arab cultural revolution, as any new thought in Arab countries is always opposed on religious grounds, regardless of whether it addresses religion, ethics, politics and the system of government, or economics and the system of production and distribution of wealth, social customs and traditions, or science, philosophy, art, language and literature.[28] This is so, he believes, because of the place of religion in the life of the Arab people and their belief in its priority and inviolable perfection. An attempt is therefore needed to explain to the people the essence of religion and to introduce a radical change in their understanding of its role in society.[29] He limits himself to Islam in his writings because he knows it best, as he says, and because it is the religion of the majority in the Arab world.[30]

Al-Nuwayhī believes that Islam began as a progressive and revolutionary religion, but that it has turned, since the ages of decadence, into a tool for restricting the intellect and rigidifying society. He adduces two causes for this: (1) the rise of a class of people (the ᶜulamā', rijāl al-dīn) who monopolizes the interpretation of religion and claim they alone have the right to speak for it and make pronouncements about what opinions and doctrines agree or disagree with it; and (2) the belief of this class that the religious sources and texts have regulations and teachings that are binding and cannot be amended or changed, whether they deal with doctrine or with matters of everyday life.[31]

Al-Nuwayhī asserts that this development is an extraneous accretion, since Islam recognizes no class of people like that of a

priesthood in other religions. He admits the need for specialists in Islamic learning but he objects to their claim to infallibility, which prompts them to refuse discussion, accuse intellectual opponents of unbelief and atheism, seek to prohibit the publication of books objectionable to them, obtain government confiscation of such books if published, persecute their authors and incite the authorities and the common people against them.[32]

Furthermore, al-Nuwayhī argues that the earlier religious sources and their regulations and teachings are not immutable in any categorical and absolute manner. The claim of the ʿulamā' that these sources constitute a perfect and comprehensive system which is useful without change for all people in all times and places is not accepted by al-Nuwayhī. When these men refer to the Qur'ān to support their view, he challenges their interpretation. For example, he suggests that S. 6:38, the Qur'anic passage that says, "We have neglected nothing in the Book," does not mean that God mentioned everything in the Qur'ān, as they claim, but that the Book intended in this context is the Preserved Tablet (al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ) which is with God from eternity and contains the Qur'ān as well as all creation and decrees for everyone and everything.[33] And when the ʿulamā' refer to such passages of the Qur'ān as S. 16:89, "And We have sent down on thee the Book explaining all things," or S. 12:111, " . . . a detailed exposition of everything," or S. 5:3, "Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed my blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion," al-Nuwayhī counters that the reference here is only to the principles of religious doctrine, and not also to matters of everyday life, as they claim.[34] He objects strongly to those who claim the Qur'ān is a record of all sciences and all fields of human knowledge. Recognizing the breadth, the multiplicity and the intricacies of modern science and learning, he accuses them of adopting the position of those who take leave of the human intellect and propagate social stagnation and a backward-looking, reactionary Islam.[35] Likewise, he objects strongly to those who claim the Qur'ān, the Sunna of the Prophet and the Islamic legal schools have the answers to all questions and the solutions to all problems. He declares such people to be ignorant on two counts, first because they show they know nothing about the extent and complexity of modern legal sciences, codes and

systems; and secondly, because they show they have no idea about the history of Islamic law itself, which passed through many stages of growth and change, and exhibited vitality and flexibilty in its ages of ascendancy.[36]

Al-Nuwayhī points to the fact that the verses dealing with legal matters in the Qur'ān hardly exceed five hundred and that the crimes for which punishments (ḥudūd) are specifically prescribed in it are only five. Leaving aside discussions on differences of interpretation and on the extent of actual implementation of these laws in Islamic history, al-Nuwayhī argues that the Qur'ān does not prescribe punishments for most of the major crimes it forbids, now called felonies, let alone the misdemeanors or minor infractions of modern legal terminology. This reality shows that the majority of Islamic rules are more like ethical values than laws in the accurate sense of the word.[37]

When the Sunna of the Prophet, i.e., his sayings and deeds, are added to the Qur'ān as a source of more legal details, furthered by the practice and sayings of his Companions and their Followers and the teachings of the early Muslim jurists, al-Nuwayhī still argues that the legal system thus constructed is far from being one to answer every question and solve every problem until resurrection day, as is claimed. Rather, he turns this fact around to support his argument. If the Qur'ān contained comprehensive legislation, it would not have needed the additional prescriptions of the Sunna and its explanatory or expansive details. And if the Qur'ān and Sunna both constituted an exhaustive Islamic legislation, the Muslims would not have needed the practice and sayings of the Companions and their Followers. And if all these sources had been enough, Islam would not have needed the various legal schools, including the four main ones still prevailing, that arose to respond to the differing needs of society.[38]

Al-Nuwayhī adds that the history of Islamic law shows Muslims even adopted certain non-Muslim laws and institutions from the territories they conquered with regard to novel matters, especially those concerning the judiciary, the political and administrative systems, the army, the finances, the postal system and other legal aspects of social organization.[39]

Al-Nuwayhī admits that Islam, unlike some other religions, is not only concerned with the spiritual salvation of man in the

hereafter, but also with life in this world, in which it wants human beings to have happiness, prosperity, justice, equality and dignity. God could have legislated every necessary detail for that but wisely refrained in order to dignify man with the use of his intellect and freedom. Thus, in addition to the principles of religious doctrine and the rituals of worship, Islam has provided two things: (1) it set up the sublime ethical ideals that Muslims should strive to achieve but it left them free to choose the means to these ideals in accordance with their changing needs and circumstances; and (2) through Qur'ān and Sunna, it provided the Muslims during the lifetime of the Prophet with a *minimum* of civil legislation which they urgently needed at the time, on account of the sudden and staggering change occasioned by the rise of Islam.[40]

Al-Nuwahī emphasizes that this legislation was only a minimum and that the Prophet was often reluctant to give further legislation, even when asked, lest it fetter Muslims in later times.[41] He also emphasizes that in matters of daily life, the Prophet accepted the suggestions or even the corrections of his Companions. The well-known *ḥadīth* regarding the Prophet's objection to the manual pollination of palm trees (*abr al-nakhl*) is quoted by al-Nuwayhī to show that the Prophet corrected himself, when the following year's crop of dates was bad because the palms had been left to natural pollination on his advice, and he said, "I am only a human being. When I order you in a matter of religion adhere to it, but when I order you in a matter of personal opinion, I am only a human being" or, in another version, he said, "You are more knowledgeable [than I am] about matters of your world."[42] Al-Nuwayhī argues that modern Muslims are also more knowledgeable about matters of their modern world and that they have the right, even the duty, to legislate for it in order to complement the rules of the Qurān, provided they remain bound by its sublime moral aims and ethical ideals.[43]

Al-Nuwayhī goes a step further and invokes the action of ᶜUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 644), who clearly stopped applying certain injunctions of the Qur'ān because the circumstances of his day were different from those of the Prophet (d. 632). The two examples he invokes are ᶜUmar's cessation of punishing theft, temporarily contravening S. 5:38 during the year of

famine, and his stopping of the payment of a portion of the *zakāt* to "those whose hearts have been reconciled" to Islam (*al-mu'allafati qulūbuhum*), as stipulated in S. 9:60. Al-Nuwayhī extols this as an act of courage and wisdom on the part of ᶜUmar and refuses to justify it on any other ground but ᶜUmar's correct understanding of the spirit of Islam and his living logic which evolved in accordance with developing circumstances.[44] Basing his view on Muḥammad ᶜAbduh's distinction between *uṣūl* (roots) and *furūᶜ* (branches) in religion, the former being matters relating to doctrine, worship rituals and ethics and the latter matters relating to human transactions and social relations, al-Nuwayhī agrees with ᶜAbduh and his followers of *al-Manār* school that *uṣūl* may not be changed but that *furūᶜ* may be, in accordance with the needs of changing circumstances.[45] The classical legal principle of *maṣlaḥa* (public interest) of the community is also adduced in support of this stance.[46] Not satisfied with generalities, al-Nuwayhī takes up, as an example, the question regarding the woman's legal share of inheritance which, according to the Qur'ān (S. 4:11 ff), is half that of the man. He notes that it is not a matter relating to doctrine or worship but rather to everyday life and social organization. He also notes that the circumstances that necessitated this inequality in the past, by placing additional requirements and obligations on the man, do not obtain in modern times. He therefore calls for a change in the implementation of the Qur'anic prescription after proper studies of the situation,[47] a change that may very well amount to ignoring the injunction of the sacred text in this regard.

This is a very courageous call. Radical as it is, it is in line with al-Nuwayhī's argument from the data of Islamic history he selected, and with his own understanding of the essence of religion and the modern Arab need for change in this matter. He recognizes that Islam has a societal component, relating to the organization of the world, in addition to its spiritual component relating to salvation or perdition in the next. He does not want to secularize this world, for he still wants it to be inspired by the sublime ethics of Islam, and to remain mindful of its doctrines of faith and its worship rituals. But in his new understanding of Islam based on a creative interpretation of Islamic history and religious texts, he disallows the claim that Islam has

a comprehensive and final system organizing all the worldly affairs of humanity, and he encourages Muslims to seek their own solutions to modern problems and their own answers to modern questions without the need for authentication from past tradition, but in the abiding spirit of Islamic ethics, even if there may arise occasions when it is necessary to discontinue the implementation of certain Qur'anic prescriptions.

Another Arab thinker who envisages the possibility of discontinuing certain Qur'anic prescriptions if the need arises is the Lebanese scholar Ḥasan Ṣaᶜb. In his book *al-Islām Tujāh Taḥaddiyāt al-Ḥayā al-ᶜAṣriyya* (Islam Facing the Challenges of Modern Life) he says:

> Nobody can make us abandon our intellect in understanding the Qur'ān in a new way in light of our unprecedented new conditions. If we see a need to stop the implementation (*waqf al-ᶜamal*) of any one of its [the Qur'ān's] texts, God has given us this right. For He wants His words to be the source of our action and not our inaction, a cause of our success and not our destruction.[48]

Ḥasan Ṣaᶜb does not argue for this position from historical precedent, as al-Nuwayḥī does, but from a theological viewpoint that takes seriously the Qur'anic concept of man as a vicegerent (*khalīfa*) of God on earth (S. 2:30, for example) and as a free being capable of arriving at the Truth under God by his own reason and senses (S. 13:1-4, for example). As a result, he conceives of Islam as a ceaseless becoming, as a permanent dynamism, as a continuous intellectual revolutionism, the ideological framework of whose civilization can always be creatively renovated with the help of creative minds. Whereas modern Western civilization, for him, is in essence mainly rational and scientific, Islam is metaphysical and its civilization mainly religious — a fact which, he says, is at the origin of the challenges of modern life that Islam is experiencing. Only creative minds can allow Islam to rise to those challenges, but they must act freely to rediscover the true spirit and essence of Islam in order to build a new Islamic civilization.[49]

The aim of Islam through Qur'anic revelation and the Muḥammadan message is, Ṣaᶜb affirms, to awaken the con-

sciousness of man in all its ontological and teleological dimensions. He says, "After God, man is the goal of the existence of all that is; and together with God, man is the acme of the movement of all that will be."[50] This view of man presupposes the limitless ability of man for perfection, to be achieved with the help of revelation, i.e., through dialogue with God Who is Himself Absolute Perfection.[51] Belief in this ability is the basis of all religious, civilizational, economic or social rebirth according to Ṣaᶜb.

In this perspective, Muslim man is a creating man because he takes on the moral qualities of God. He creates in freedom, love, justice and mercy. His dignity lies in righteous action which makes use of nature, redeems history and orients its movement to its divine goal.[52]

Ḥasan Ṣaᶜb emphasizes the importance of human action as an Islamic value. But he says it is only a means, not an end. Like God's action, human action in the correct Islamic understanding is creative and good, and its end is to transcend human necessity in order to achieve perfection in freedom. The correct Islamic view of social, political and economic issues in any age is consequently a futuristic, progressive view and not a past-oriented, reactionary one. It differs from that of others because it is not worldly, racial, national, class-biased or materialist but rather universalist, humane and spiritual. In Ṣaᶜb's view of Islam, man makes history and is the goal of history and of all economic, social and political effort. After the Prophet's death, many Muslims misunderstood this reality and confused means with ends. Ṣaᶜb says that man must now return to God by freeing himself from all the institutions that this misunderstanding has brought about; he must create new social, political and economic institutions that free him. With the guidance of God's liberating revelation, with the perspicacity of the intellect God bestowed on him, with the energy of the creative will God gave him, and with the power of the mastery over nature God granted him, the Muslim should face the social, political and economic problems of this age in a creative, Islamic way. This is his human responsibility, and to bear it is to bear the Trust, the *Amāna* (S. 33:72), which God offered man and which man accepted.[53]

Ṣaᶜb thus sees the Muslims being called upon in modern times to build a new Islamic civilization which is as near as

possible to their ideal City of God. The wisdom of Muslim ancestors and the lessons learnt from their historical experience should be taken into consideration, but other human non-Muslim experiences should be permitted to enhance their efforts. A spiritual, democratic structure should result, in which there is no distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim, between a man and a woman, because God does not make such distinctions. The command of God in Islam is that there be love, mercy, charity, justice, brotherhood and freedom. He does not command that Islam be declared state religion. Virtue should govern and man's action should be what gives him value. This is the truth of Islam as Ṣaᶜb sees it. But he is aware that there is a deep chasm between the ideal truth of Islam and its concrete reality. "The Islamic truth is mercy, freedom and justice; but the Islamic reality is tyranny, servitude and injustice. The Islamic truth is liberation, civilization and progress; but the Islamic reality is reification, fragmentation and backwardness."[54] He attributes this to the fact that God commands but it is man's responsibility to act:

> All human progress is due to God's command and man's responsibility. [Progress], therefore, belongs to us as it does to all human beings. Our first responsibility today is to make what is ours potentially—belong to us actually.[55]

As a social scientist, Ḥasan Ṣaᶜb is aware of the grave societal problems of the Arab world that delay and, in some cases, obstruct progress. But he firmly believes in the priority of spiritual and moral regeneration as the spark of any action leading to social, economic and political progress and the building of a new Islamic civilization. Nothing for him is more necessary than modernizing the Arab mind itself. A comprehensive cultural revolution is needed in order to move the very soul of the Arabs and their whole being in a new creative way.

He formulated this message succinctly in his book *Taḥdīth al-ᶜAql al-ᶜArabī: Dirāsāt ḥawl al-Thawra al-Thaqāfiyya al-Lāzima li-l-Taqaddum al-ᶜArabī fī-l-ᶜAṣr al-Ḥadīth*[56] (Modernization of the Arab Mind: Studies on the Cultural Revolution Necessary for Arab Progress in the Modern Age). Recognizing "the organic, dynamic relation between thought and life, be-

tween concept and behavior,"[57] he sets out to analyze the underdevelopment, the contradictions and the incoherence in Arab society caused by the modernization of certain aspects of Arab life and behavior before modernizing Arab culture and thought which, in his view, must be given priority. He generally subscribes to the postulates of modernization theory, yet he does not want to restrict development to a narrow economic meaning, but rather wants to place it in a wider civilizational context of cultural and structural progress. Modernization, for him, is a necessary stage in the growth of the human personality and of its mastery over nature and the self through science and technology. For it is this growth of the human personality to its full potentials in free, creative and happy contact with others that is the goal of civilization, modernization, development and progress.[58]

Ḥasan Ṣaᶜb discusses several requisites for the modernization of the Arab mind that should lead to the growth of the Arab personality. Among these are the following: (1) a methodological reorientation to life aiming at the making of things rather than of words, implying a determined and concerted effort at development based on rationality and on the application of modern science and technology in the use of material resources;[59] (2) a change of the Arab leadership's vision and the adoption of a comprehensive modernization strategy or, if need be, a democratic replacement of the leadership itself by a committed elite aware of its historic message of pioneering all-round development and directing the modernization process;[60] (3) a structural change of Arab institutions, and primarily the political institutions, to embody the dynamic and innovative needs of modernization;[61] (4) the modernization of Arab education and the preparation of the basic human elements that will build up the new Arab-Islamic civilization and sustain it in future generations by transforming the contemporary Arab from an imitating being to an innovative being;[62] (5) the modernization of the Arab media of communications, and the establishment of an information policy that aims at educating and mobilizing the public in all matters relating to the process of development.[63]

All these requisites are, in Ṣaᶜb's view, interrelated and complementary. But the requisite which underlies them all and

is indispensable for the modernization of the Arab mind is the modernization of the Arab value system.[64] He affirms that cultural values are strongly related to religion, to the point where they are often indistinguishable. Any discussion of their relation to development and modernization is therefore bound to discuss religious renewal. In the case of Islam, which is the basis of the Arab cultural value system, there is need for a new understanding of the Qur'ān in a methodical manner that leads to new *ijtihād*.

Ṣaᶜb believes that the divine word of the Qur'ān created a new message, a new law, a new community and a new civilization. It was the rallying focal point of all the historical, geographical, social, economic and political factors combining to bring about the rise of Islam in the seventh century. Therefore, Islam cannot be understood apart from the unique power that moved it, namely, the power of the creative divine word, for so long as this word continued to be creatively effective in the human soul and in human society and history, Islam continued to grow and expand and make progress. The most wonderful aspect of the miraculous character of this word, in Ṣaᶜb's view, is that it is a divine command for constant dynamism. As "the Book of Dynamism," the Qur'ān, for Ṣaᶜb, is the wondrous image of the dynamism of divine creativity, and its command for dynamism is the only thing that does not change. Everything else is in constant motion and continuous change.[65]

The dynamism of divine creativity is transferable to humans, since God breathed into man of His Spirit, made him His vicegerent (*khalīfa*) on earth and gave him the Trust (*Amāna*) of creativity. As a result, the divine word is not only dynamic and creative but also liberating: belief in God is not absolute slavery to Him, as is incorrectly believed, but it is rather absolute freedom in Him. Ḥasan Ṣaᶜb understands this freedom in God, not as Muslim mystics have done, because in their understanding it remains individual and aims at personal self-renewal and self-creativeness. He understands it rather as a commitment to God to be duty-bound with Him in the constant creation of everything, since, as Muḥammad had said, man should put on the qualities of God and, like Muḥammad in the episode of the *Miᶜrāj* (Ascension to Heaven), man should not be satisfied with only the vision of God, but should also fashion

anew everything on earth in its light,[66] as the Prophet did after the *Miᶜrāj*.

Ṣaᶜb believes that this new understanding of the Qur'ān and of the truth of Islam will engender a stronger and deeper renewal in Islamic thought and life than there has ever been before, because it will be the basis for endless dialogue between God and man, between man and man and between man and nature. Ṣaᶜb contends that the prevailing Muslim belief in Islam as an unchanging law that regulates all thought and life is wrong,[67] for Islam in his view offers itself as a method of continuous renewal, creative adaptability, dynamic interaction and dialogue. This is most evident in the Islamic concept of *ijtihād*, which was practiced even in the lifetime of the Prophet, and later by his Companions and their Followers, and later still by a growing number of Muslim jurists. *Ijtihād* should not be understood merely as a jurisprudential process of deriving new legal prescriptions by reasoning; for, Ṣaᶜb believes, it is much wider and deeper than that and is related to the spirit of Islam and its adaptability to changing human conditions and needs, proceeding, as it does, from the creative dynamism of the divine Qur'anic word.

Ṣaᶜb recognizes the existence of different juristic opinions on *ijtihād*, some of which limit its practice and others which permit it in all matters except religious doctrines and rituals prescribed in the Qur'ān. But he subscribes to its absolute necessity for Islamic renewal, and he believes every Muslim has a right — even a duty — to exercise *ijtihād* if he has the scholarly qualifications to do so.[68] He even says that every Muslim is called upon to qualify himself for *ijtihād* by learning and righteousness. In his opinion, *ijtihād* should remain the means of the Muslim community to retain the creative dynamism of Qur'anic revelation. As for the manner in which this *ijtihād* is to be socially organized and whether it should be exercised by individual scholars, learned councils or representative bodies, that is up to the Muslim community to decide by consensus or majority vote. Likewise, the Muslim community is free to decide on the kind of needed political rule agreeing with its customs and interests, and on all legislation regarding public and private law, all of which can be changed to accommodate changing conditions and needs.[69]

There is a great affinity between Ḥasan Ṣaᶜb's interpretation of Islam and the views of Muḥammad ᶜAbduh (d. 1905) and Muḥammad Iqbal (d. 1938) whose works he often cites, but he also draws upon the opinions of such disciples of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350) and Najm al-Dīn al-Ṭūfī (d. 1316) with regard to the scope of *ijtihād*, as well as upon the opinions of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064) with regard to the principle that *ijtihād* is a duty of the commoner and the scholar, each practicing it according to his ability.[70]

There is no doubt that Ṣaᶜb has been able to emphasize liberalizing and liberating elements in Arab culture that should be revived, strengthened and developed in the modernization efforts of contemporary Arabs, but there is no doubt also of his commitment to the view that contemporary Arabs should develop a new outlook on life and acquire modern science and technology as a basis for development. His major contribution is that he cogently presents Islam as a belief system endowed with permanent dynamism through the Qur'ān and with intellectual creativity through *ijtihād*, and he presents man as God's instrument on earth to continue this dynamism and this creativity in freedom, love and justice.

There are several other Arab thinkers who, like Ṣaᶜb, point to what they believe to be prevailing misconceptions which Muslims have unadvisedly perpetuated as the truth of Islam and which, in their view, should be corrected in the contemporary renewal movement. One such thinker is Muḥammad ᶜAmara of Egypt who has devoted most of his intellectual activities to the study of modern Islamic reform efforts and the assessment of their historical moorings in what he considers to be the correct and authentic interpretation of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's teachings. In one of his works, *al-Islām wa-l-Sulṭa al-Dīniyya*[71] (Islam and Relgious Authority), he squarely faces the sensitive issue of religious authority in Islam and its relation to the political order.

ᶜAmāra disagrees with the increasingly vociferous individuals, groups, parties and organizations who claim to speak for Islam and who call for the establishment of an Islamic state. He does not mention by name any one of those in the Arab world, since it appears he does not want to antagonize them but rather to win them over. He actually invites them to permit enlightened

Islamic reason to judge objectively according to the data of the Islamic heritage itself and the lessons of Islamic history regarding this matter.[72] Yet he quotes the Pakistani thinker Abū-l-Aᶜlā Mawdūdī (d. 1979) and strongly criticizes the concept of *ḥākimiyya* (governance) of God which Mawdūdī's writings have helped to propagate in the Arab world through translations and Sayyid Quṭb's elaborations.[73] ᶜAmāra is thus indirectly criticizing Sayyid Quṭb and the several radical and militant offshoots of the Muslim Brothers who have taken him as their mentor.

ᶜAmāra says that, apart from the Shīᶜa, all trends in Islamic thought hold that no individual or body of individuals has the right to issue prescriptions claiming them to be divine. He asserts that no human being has religious authority to claim he speaks in the name of God and has the right of uniquely knowing and interpreting the opinion of Heaven, be that in matters of religion or of worldly affairs. This is the case, he affirms, whether the person making such claim occupies a religious post or holds political office, and it is equally the case whether the claim is made by one individual or by an intellectual or political organization.[74] ᶜAmāra argues that accepting the religious authority of an individual or an organization implies accepting their putative infallibility—a quality which, he says, Islam denies all human beings with the exception of Prophet Muḥammad who, even then, was infallible only in the religious aspect of his call.[75]

To emphasize the latter point, ᶜAmāra refers to the *ḥadīth* on the manual pollination of palm trees (*abr al-nakhl*) in which Prophet Muḥammad concludes that he is merely a human being, i.e., that he is subject to error and correction in matters relating to this world (regarding which others may be more knowledgeable), but that Muslims should adhere to his teachings in matters of religion.[76] ᶜAmāra sees here a distinction which Islam makes between religion on the one hand and politics and worldly affairs on the other. He refuses to qualify this distinction as a separation of religion from worldly affairs. It is a distinction (*tamyīz*) of spheres, he says, not a separation (*faṣl*).[77]

Furthermore, he notes how the early Companions of the Prophet almost purposely insisted on denying the nascent Caliphate to the Prophet's heirs, at least initially, in order to

keep it as a political post clearly distinct from the Prophet's religious authority in people's minds. He also notes how Abū Bakr, the first Caliph, considerd the post to be devoid of the infallible divine revelation given to the Prophet and admitted he might err in performing his caliphal duties and thus pleaded for correction when in error.[78] Other Companions and later leaders of Islamic thought practiced *ijtihād* but none claimed the holiness of religious authority (i.e., infallibility) for his opinion.[79]

ᶜAmāra concludes that the Islamic position in this matter crystallizes two principles:

First, that Muslims accept in faith the religion divinely revealed in the Qur'ān and seek the help of the Sunna (the Prophet's praxis) in order to understand it, always guided by rationality in interpreting a sacred text and reconciling — without forcibleness — any apparent disagreement in it with reason, and always assured that the Sunna is free from fabrication and corruption so long as its content is in agreement with the Qur'ān.

Second, that in politics and other matters relating to this world not dealt with in the Qur'ān by a text and in detail, Muslims adjudicate personal opinion and *ijtihād*, their criterion being the public interest of the community and the avoidance of any possible harm to it, but always mindful of the general ethical ideals and universal principles laid down in the Qur'ān.[80]

After a survey of historical instances, ᶜAmāra expresses his belief that Islam, far from being a theocracy, affirms the lay (*madanī*) character of political authority and emphasizes its human quality insofar as assuming it depends on consultation (*shūrā*) with other humans, on selection and public acceptance by humans and on the fact that the ruler is responsible to a community of humans.[81] Yet Islam, in his opinion, does not call for separation between religion and the world because it does take a definite position regarding certain matters of the world and establishes a number of universal principles and general divine commendations for social life as high ideals to be pursued.[82] Separation between state and religion is unthinkable and impractical, according to ᶜAmāra, since religion is never realized in a vacuum but in human thought and behavior like all other human intellectual constructs with which it has to co-exist. Hence it is more correct to say that Islam rejects the idea

that the temporal and the religious authorities should be unified and endorses the idea that they should co-exist. Islam distinguishes between them but does not separate them.[83]

ᶜAmāra argues that it is an intellectual error to exclude religion as one of the factors influencing society, if this exclusion were possible at all. He affirms, on the other hand, that giving a religious character to politics and the system of government is an attempt totally alien to the spirit of Islam.[84] For Islam, in his view, distinguishes between the community of religion and the community of politics, the former being made up of Muslim believers, the latter of citizens of various faiths, as is clear from the example of the Constitution of Medina drawn up by Prophet Muḥammad himself in which the Muslim believers were referred to as one *umma*, and the Jews of the tribe of Banū ᶜAwf and other Jews in Medina were included in it as *umma* along with the believers.[85]

ᶜAmāra gives examples from what he called "a dark page in the history of Muslims"[86] in which he cites caliphs from various historical periods (and governors acting on their behalf) who arrogated to themselves religious authority and presumed to rule by divine right, imposing doctrines and eliminating opponents by brute force. He explains the genesis and development of the Shīᶜa as a protest movement against such human injustice and as a call for the establishment of divine justice through the rule of the God-chosen infallible *imām* descended from the Prophet. According to ᶜAmāra, Shīᶜī Islam eventually ended up — like Sunnī Islam — in excluding the people and the community of believers from political power of which they ought in fact to be the source and the basis.[87] He argues, with Muḥammad ᶜAbduh (d. 1905), that no person in Islam has religious authority over others, nor has anyone the right to impose doctrines or prescribe religious rulings, not even a caliph, a *qāḍī*, a *muftī* or a *Shayk al-Islām*. The authority that anyone of those has is a lay authority circumscribed by Islamic law.[88] It is basically an authority to advise and guide and call to what is good, but never to coerce. Yet this is also the duty of every commoner in Islam.[89]

As for political authority, it rests with the people. Islam has not laid down a specific political order for Muslims because the logic of its being good for all times and places requires that this

be left to the people to formulate and to change in accordance with the evolution of the human mind and the interest of the community, within the framework of the general commendations and universal principles of Islam,[90] and in the light of the experience of other civilizations.[91] ᶜAmāra concludes that those who claim that Islamic revelation comprises a political, social, economic and administrative order for Muslim societies, and that humans have nothing but to implement it without recourse to human will are, whether they intend it or not, putting the creativity of the human mind out of action and giving up an important distinguishing feature of Islam.[92] Furthermore, those who, contrary to the teachings of Islam, call for the unification of the temporal and the religious authorities are, for him, merely resorting to an age-old ambition of all despotic, tyrannical authorities to disguise their despotism and their tyranny by clothing them in a religious wrapping in order to use religion as a weapon against the people who seek their right, nay their duty, to keep their rulers accountable, and against the people who want to practice their rights to legislate and remain the source of all power and all authority.[93]

Thus, ᶜAmāra's professed aim is to enlighten Muslims and expose a prevailing misconception perpetuated by what he considers to be erroneous human interpretation of scripture as well as willful, manipulative designs of rulers. Another such misconception is the treatment of non-Muslims in a Muslim society which ᶜAmāra touched upon lightly here, and which he dealt with frankly and in detail in another book entitled *al-Islām wa-l-Waḥda al-Qawmiyya* (Islam and National Unity),[94] the first printing of which (11,000 copies) was sold out in ten days.[95] The book appeared in Cairo in 1979 at the height of communal tensions between Muslims and Copts in Egypt during Sādāt's presidency and was alternately praised and condemned. Its aim was to show that Islam—as correctly understood from the Qur'ān and the Prophet's teachings—was tolerant of Christians and other non-Muslim believers, that discrimination against Christians and others was unjustly and wrongly instituted by the Muslim state in certain periods of Islamic history for mundane and unfair purposes, that Christians and others rightly rebelled against such discrimination several times in history but that they were on the whole loyal citizens, many of whom gave distin-

guished services to the Muslim state and remarkable contributions to Islamic civilization. He stressed that religious pluralism which is accepted in the Qur'ān (S. 11:118; S. 16:93; S. 42:8) is a fact that will remain with mankind challenging Muslims and other believers to compete for righteousness and good deeds (S. 2:148; S. 5:48) and to co-operate with one another in brotherhood within the framework of national unity.

The ideological commitment of ᶜAmāra to Egyptian (and pan-Arab) national unity and to the concept of the equality of all citizens may have given direction to his thought. But his interpretation of relevant Qur'anic texts and selected historical facts to support his position is plausible, if untraditional. His basic belief is that God-given religion is one in essence and that religions differ only in rituals.[96] Hence, his conviction that members of all religious communities should be equal.

For his part, the Algerian scholar Muḥammad Arkūn (Mohammed Arkoun), of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the Sorbonne (Paris III), has been calling for a totally new approach in his extensive writings in French and their latterly increasing Arabic translations.[97] While he generally appreciates the contributions of Orientalists to the study of Arab and Islamic culture and history, he believes they are limited by their philological method and their historicism grounded in nineteenth-century positivism. The social sciences and the humanities have undergone tremendous development and innovative change since the 1950s which, in his opinion, most Orientalists have not caught up with. Similarly many Arab thinkers, in his opinion, are behind the current Western approaches, either lingering in historicist writings or in traditionalist and apologetic ones, locked up as most of them are in ideological debates.

Unlike the Moroccan scholar, ᶜAbd Allāh al-ᶜArwī, who considers historicism (*al-tārīkhāniyya*) to be a necessary stage for contemporary Arab thought to pass through so that it may transcend traditionalism,[98] Muḥammad Arkūn believes Arab thought should rather directly and immediately embark on the stage of historicity (*al-tārīkhiyya*) in order to liberate itself and historical study as much as possible from ideological influences of all sorts.[99] By understanding the historicity of human existence and by applying the latest multidisciplinary method-

ologies of the historical sciences, sociology, anthropology, psychology, linguistics and semiotics to the study of Arab-Islamic history and culture, contemporary Arabs would not only achieve a clear comprehension of their past and present in order to orient themselves successfully to the future, but would also be contributing to these modern sciences themselves, correcting and advancing them by testing their validity. This is what Arkūn professes to be doing.[100]

The basic thrust of his writings is the deconstruction of the prevalent conceptions of Arab-Islamic history and culture as anything but the product of human action in time and space. His analytical method aims at going behind these conceptions to expose their reality as mere constructs of the human mind reacting to specific conditions in a specific period and a specific place. His writings attempt in various treatments to show the epistemological underpinnings of human thought itself, the purpose being to exhibit its limits and nature as grounded in a particular language and a particular historical social environment. Arkūn's ultimate goal is certainly not a solipsistic attitude to knowledge but an emphasis on the historicity of any knowledge. Applied to Islam this emphasis aims at a process of demythologization, which many Muslims find to be very disturbing because it appears to be undermining the foundations of their faith. Arkūn, however, believes it allows Muslims a real understanding of their culture as a product of previous generations and thus encourages them to contribute to it and change it to respond to modern needs as their ancestors had done in their time.

Using epistemological analysis, especially as developed by Michel Foucault regarding knowledge and power, Arkūn believes that in Islam it is urgent to show how manifestations of meaning have been transformed into ideological categories and ranked according to the choice of dominant class, the imperatives of historical conditions or the weight of a stereotyped tradition.[101] It is therefore necessary in the modern age to unveil the disguise mechanisms of the traditional culture and unmask the real truth, as opposed to purely psychological truth.[102] Arkūn's aim is to establish methods of scientific thought in the study of Islam as manifested in history. His intellectual openness to the new methodologies of the social sciences and the

humanities is not, he assures us, a precipitate adoption of "fashionable" ways but rather an attempt to give an example of what today's *ijtihād* should be that would be faithful to the spiritual and intellectual tension of the great thinkers of classical Islam, yet one that would also establish a rational and intelligent break with the logical procedures, the epistemological postulates and the conceptual apparatus of those same thinkers.[103] This is imperative today because contemporary Islamic thought is going through unprecedented, new historical change the like of which it never witnessed in the ages of early *ijtihād*. And since every age has its own difficulties and problems, as well as its concomitant methods and intellectual attitudes to suit them, Islamic thought today is obliged to rethink and to write on questions of *ijtihād* and all that is related to criticism of knowledge and its foundations.[104] Arkūn believes that the corpus of traditional Islamic knowledge that has reached present-day Muslims has been built on foundations of a cognitive system which was gradually developed in response to the socio-economic and political conditions of the early centuries of Islam. The persistence of this cognitive system, in his view, is not due to its exceptional epistemological validity or its incomparable ontological moorings, as religious reasoning would have people believe, but rather because of the continuity of the socio-economic and political conditions that have governed the exercise of thought in Arab-Islamic society.[105] This cognitive system has been able to lay down the parameters of what is thinkable (*le pensable*) and to forge the mental tools and linguistic mechanisms to express it clearly. Arkūn defines the thinkable as follows:

> The thinkable of a linguistic community in a given period is what is possible to think of and render explicit with the aid of the available mental equipment.[106]

What is unthinkable (*l'impensable*), therefore, is what is not possible to think of and render explicit in the same period and in the same socio-cultural area: either because of the limitations of the cognitive system and current modes of intelligibility, or because of ideological constraints that are risky to break out of unless one is ready to pay the price, or because the intensity of thought reaches regions of the ineffable or the unfathomable

opaqueness of being, as in poetic or prophetic discourse.[107] Examples of unthinkable areas of Arab-Islamic thought given by Arkūn include the critical study of (a) the Qur'ān after it had been canonized by ʿUthmān, (b) the received Ḥadīth collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and (c) the Sharīʿa after al-Shāfiʿī laid down the principles of Islamic jurisprudence.[108] Arkūn adds, however, that what is unthinkable at a certain time or in certain circumstances may become thinkable when ideological constraints are lifted and scientific conditions of free research are realized, ijtihād thus becoming possible, as in modern times; but he believes that, in Arab society today, political will and deep-rooted beliefs of the masses still obstruct free thought.[109] One area of the unthinkable is what Arkūn calls the unthought-of (l'impensé)[110] which is a wide and important area modern thinkers should explore, now that they have new methodological and conceptual approaches to reach new horizons in the understanding of Arab-Islamic culture and history.

Arkūn aims at a twofold objective: (1) to enrich the history of thought by highlighting what is at stake cognitively, intellectually and ideologically in the tensions among the many schools of thought; and (2) to dynamize contemporary Islamic thought by drawing attention to the problems it has repressed, the taboos it has set up, the limits it has drawn and the horizons it has ceased to look at or forbidden to view — all, in the name of what it has progressively imposed as the only truth.[111]

Arkūn's attempts at what he considers to be the dynamizing of contemporary Islamic thought has appeared to many traditional Muslims as the dynamiting of Islam itself. He is himself aware of this danger of being misunderstood and tries to warn against it in his writings.[112] He believes, however, that the objective truth is that those who most vehemently reject Western culture (and his own approach) are usually those who know nothing about the progress of scientific knowledge and the modern achievements of the social sciences and the humanities since 1950 and the real conditions in which they have been achieved.[113] He notes, for example, how he has been condemned by those who read the Arabic translation of his French description of the Qur'ān as a discourse of mythical structure.[114] He says that concepts like "discourse," "myth" and

"structure" have not yet been thought of properly in contemporary Arab thought, and that discussion with his opponents on such matters leads to no good results if they cling to traditional philology, narrative linear history and the Qur'anic use of the concept of usṭūra[115] (myth, as untrue legend) whereas he understands myth in the anthropological sense as a symbolic story that reveals an inspiring truth which is a live force within a culture or subculture.

And yet he had to respond to his detractors in the 1984 Cairo symposium convened by the Center for Arab Unity Studies where a paper of his on "The Heritage: Its Content and Identity, Its Positive and Negative Characteristics"[116] was read on his behalf in his absence. His written response[117] decries the obligation which a Muslim Arab has always to resort to, wasting valuable time in order to proclaim his true faith and his respect for the current ideological postulates underlying Muslim people's perception of historical, social, psychological and cultural reality, if he is not to be considered as a renegade or an unbeliever by them. Arkūn declares historicity to be still in the realm of the unthought-of (l'impensé), even among many Arab scholars, and he urges them to keep abreast of the latest developments in contemporary knowledge if they are not to fall into tragic misunderstandings. He also urges them to study the Qur'ān in the light of the new methodologies developed recently in the disciplines of history, linguistics, sociology, anthropology and others as a basic initial step or point of departure for a new, critical understanding of the Arab-Islamic heritage and the Arab-Islamic past as a whole.

He recognizes that, because Arabs today are fighting Western imperialism and Zionism, they need a combatting ideology which they readily find in their old Islamic religious and cultural heritage. But he believes that this combatting ideology uses the Islamic heritage as a motive for political mobilization of the Arabs against Western imperialism and Zionism more than for effective scientific research that would unveil the present-day bearing of Arab-Islamic culture and values which, unmasked, would be shown to be related to a medieval mentality no more functional in modern times.[118] Arkūn also recognizes the fact that this ideology is endorsed emotionally by the rapidly multiplying Arab masses, particularly in the ever-growing urban

centers now becoming increasingly crowded, as much by natural growth as by continuous flow of migrants from rural areas. Urbanization in Arab society, as in all the world, continues to move ahead to the detriment of agricultural sectors. Though not as fierce as in other parts of the world, this Arab demographic movement is causing socio-cultural dislocations whose psychological effects are reflected among Muslims in the recrudescence of fundamentalist attitudes which function as sure, proven ground for identity and struggle for rights in the uncertainties of a changing society.[119] Rather than allow himself to be submerged in this surge, the scholar—according to Arkūn—should use the analytical tools provided by the most recent achievements of the social sciences and the humanities to study the situation and make it understood by the people so that it may be transcended, and a better future may be ushered in.

Arkūn has certainly established himself as one of the few scholars with deep insight into the conditions of contemporary Arab-Islamic culture, based as he is in a sound understanding of the Arab-Islamic heritage and history and a firm knowledge of the latest developments in the social sciences and the humanities. His writings are generally respected in scholarly circles in the Arab world and in the West, in spite of the exasperation of some scholars[120] with the lack of progress in the application to Arab-Islamic studies of the methodologies he advocates. One would like to see Arkūn devote more of his daring writings to the further application of those methodologies to substantive problems in Arab-Islamic studies and explore more areas of what he calls *l'impensé*, the unthought-of, in Arab-Islamic culture and history as he has eminently done, for example, in works on Miskawayh, al-Tawḥīdī and many others.[121] But Arkūn may well be justified in emphasizing method, for method is still one of the major problems in Arab-Islamic studies, the solution of which is the gate to new knowledge. The entrenched philologist-historicist approach has to be transcended, as well as the established traditional apologetic one, before new knowledge can begin to make headway. But new knowledge means new power, and those in positions of power at present continue understandably to resist change, hence Arkūn's persistent resort to continual, sometimes repetitious, elaboration of the methodologies which, he believes, will introduce change.

In the meantime, he continues to apply his methodologies wherever possible to produce intrepid and thought-provoking conclusions, and a growing number of younger Arab scholars are beginning to be inspired by his writings.

TRENDS
AND
ISSUES
IN
CONTEMPORARY

Arab

THOUGHT   by Issa J. Boullata

This book focuses on contemporary Arab thought during the past twenty years, especially since the 1967 Arab defeat in the Six Day War. Well-known Arab writers are studied, and their unprecedented and anguished exercise of self-examination and self-criticism is explored. A number of Arab thinkers are presented for the first time in English. Here is an account of some of the most recent intellectual trends in the Arab world. As the writers grapple with the Arab desire for social change, with ideas of freedom and equality and social justice, and with the problem of accommodating Arab culture to modern times, their will to preserve their national identity is displayed. The role played by Islam in the current Arab discourse is analyzed as Arab intellectuals creatively interpret their present predicament in order to make it meaningful in the present day.

Arab thought is seen here to be in crisis as it reflects this reality and questions the legitimacy of Arab political regimes. Much of the present turmoil in the Arab world can be better understood in light of this insightful treatment of contemporary Arab thinkers because it shows how the Arabs themselves feel, what they think about their own contemporary life, and how they envision their future.

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