REFORMING MODERNITY

Ethics and the New Human in the Philosophy of Abdurrahman Taha

WAEL B. HALLAQ

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For Lena and Cherine

لا انسان بغير اخلاق

There is no humanity without ethics.

—Suʾāl al-Akhlāq, 147

Contents

CONTENTS

Citation Method and Abbreviated Titles

Wherever a citation in round brackets appears in the body of the main text (e.g., *RD*, 473), it invariably refers to Taha's work. Transliterated phrases and passages quoted from Taha's writings will appear, with relevant page citations, in the endnotes, along with all other references. Works that have not been extensively analyzed are cited with unabbreviated titles.

AD: Al-ʿAmal al-Dīnī wa-Tajdīd al-ʿAql [*Religious Praxis and the Renewal of Reason*], 4th ed. Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2006.

HAF: al-Ḥaqq al-ʿArabī fil-Ikhtilāf al-Falsafī [*The Arab Right to Philosophical Difference*], 2nd ed. Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2006.

HIF: al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī fil-Ikhtilāf al-Fikrī [*The Islamic Right to Intellectual Difference*]. Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2005.

KNN: "Kayfa Nujaddid al-Naẓar fil-Turāth" ["How Do We Rethink Tradition"], in *SM*, 41–57.

RD: Rūḥ al-Dīn: Min Ḍīq al-ʿAlmāniyya ilā Siʿat al-I'timāniyya [*The Spirit of Religion: From the Narrowness of Secularism to the Capaciousness of Trusteeship*]. Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2012.

RH: Rūḥ al-Ḥadātha: al-Madkhal ilā Ta'sīs al-Ḥadātha al-Islāmiyya [*The Spirit of Modernity: A Prolegomenon to Laying the Foundations of Islamic Modernity*]. Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2006.

SA: Su'āl al-Akhlāq: Musāhama fil-Naqd al-Akhlāqī lil-Ḥadātha al-Gharbiyya [*The Question of Ethics: A Contribution to an Ethical Critique of Western Modernity*]. Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2000.

SM: Su'āl al-Manhaj: Fī Ufuq al-Ta'sīs li-Unmūdhaj Fikrī Jadīd [*The Question of Method: Toward a New Intellectual Paradigm*]. Edited by Raḍwān Marḥūm. Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Fikr wal-Ibdāʿ, 2015.

SU: *Su'āl al-ʿUnf: Bayna al-I'timāniyya wal-Ḥiwāriyya* [*The Question of Violence: Between Trusteeship and Dialogue*]. Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Fikr wal-Ibdāʿ, 2017.

TM: Tajdīd al-Manhaj fī Taqwīm al-Turāth [*Renewal of Method for the Rectification of Tradition*], 3rd ed. Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2007.

UNIT: "Al-Uṣūl al-Naẓariyya al-Takāmuliyya fil-Ishtighāl bil-Turāth" ["The Foundations of a Theory of Integral Unity in the Study of Tradition"], in *SM*, 59–70.

Preface and Acknowledgments

Abdurrahman Taha is one of the most significant philosophers that the world of Islam has produced since colonialism set foot in Afro-Asia. Still in progress, his project departs from, but leaves behind, the epistemological grounds in which the great majority of modern Muslim intellectuals have anchored their own programs of so-called reform. The general trend that begins with Buṭrus al-Bustānī, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, and Faraḥ Anṭūn at the end of the nineteenth century, ushers in the *Nahḍa* (Awakening), and culminates in the Arab world in such figures as Muhammad Arkoun, Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, and Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābrī is altogether abandoned. While the *Nahḍa* has been dominated by nationalism, Marxism, secularism, political Islamism, and liberalism, Taha's philosophical program embraces a systematic rejection of these epistemologies and modes of thought. But reasoned rejection of these movements is only the stepping-stone to his project. If rejection is the negative—or, shall we say, deconstructive—dimension of his system of thought, then the positive dimension is a constructive one, where alternatives are proffered with force and systematic virtuosity.

Over the past two and a half decades in particular, Taha has published one outstanding book after another, most remarkable for a philosopher who wrote relatively little during the first fifty years or so of his life. His works—now over twenty in all—cover incredibly vast terrains, addressing a variety of topics (linguistics, logic, ontology, reason, humility, violence, materialism, theology, dialectics and dialogue, even a philosophy of attirement).

In spite of the breadth of his interests, the thread that runs throughout the entirety of Taha's philosophical fabric, wholly making up its warp and woof, is indisputably the ethical thread. In all of its varied dimensions and directions, his project remains squarely lodged within what we generally call moral philosophy.

This book focuses precisely on this thread, as Taha weaves it into his discursive engagement with the central questions that plague modernity both in the West and in his own Muslim lands, both taken not as geographical signifiers but as epistemological formations of the first degree. To write about anything central is also not to write about many other things, which, however important they may be, must be relegated to the margins. I cannot claim that this book captures Taha's vast project in all or even most of its dimensions, but I have the confident hope that what I say here exposes the central nerves by which his system of thought operates. Put differently, and in justification of writing about a deep thinker who is still active, this book treats the vital membranes that make his project not only possible but also what it is. Change the constitution of these membranes, and the project would categorically cease to be identifiable in the manner we recognize it now. Which is also to say that although the project is ongoing, there is already a formidable body of thought that is recognizable as a unique contribution to ethics, one that we must begin to reckon with.

I should also make it clear at the outset that the astounding caliber of this thinker is not the only reason his work has commanded my attention. Taha's project is relevant to me because it navigates the same terrains and waters that have become the focus of my interest over the past two decades. The concluding part of this book, I think, adequately demonstrates the commonality between our projects, and it is with this in mind that the book should be read and interpreted. It is my hope that, whatever critique I deploy in scrutinizing his writings, it is one that is fair and faithful to the central tenets of his own project, which I deem, on the whole, to be sound and highly defensible. This is also to say that in my critique of his work, I continue my own deliberations that began with *Sharīʿa: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (2009) and that continued with *The Impossible State* (2013) and *Restating Orientalism* (2018). Any adequate appreciation of this critique presupposes close familiarity with these works.

A caveat is in order, however. I take it for granted that no work or oeuvre is immune to critique, and to the extent that I regard certain issues and

arguments in Taha as likewise central to my own concerns, I have attempted to point to the different ways that one might approach them critically. While this evidently represents *my own* engagement with Taha, I have chosen not to debate him on a variety of issues otherwise deserving of analytical and critical attention. One reason for this is my intention of presenting his work without constant interruption by my critical presence. Insofar as the *translation* of a philosophical oeuvre onto a foreign conceptual soil is at all feasible or justifiable (a risky and difficult task, I am fully aware), I have attempted *this translation* at the expense of what I hope to be a minimal interference. With this desideratum in mind, I have left a list of questions and issues without critical engagement, although on a number of important others I found it necessary to break this standard. My justification for this partial "neutrality" is that the list, at least with regard to my own interests, may stand on its own without adverse effects on what I deem central and crucial to his ethical project. I hope that the present contribution will open up ample space for engaging this philosopher's work on important and timely questions, subjecting them to a fruitful and productive critique. To say that his oeuvre requires multiple monographic interventions is to state the obvious.

My interest in Taha began in 2002, when I chanced upon his *Su'āl al-Akhlāq* in a Fes Jdid bookstore. In the decade that followed, it became increasingly clear to me that Taha's philosophy, diverging from the dominant trends in contemporary Arabic and Islamic thought, deserves serious attention. The reading of his various publications during that decade was followed by a series of graduate seminars that I offered at Columbia University, seminars in which Taha's work always constituted a chief focus. I thank the young scholars who participated in these seminars, especially Omar Abdel-Ghaffar, Mohamed Wajdi Ben Hammed, Ibrahim El Houdaiby, Karim Malak, Ali Naji Moughania, Margaret Williams Scarborough, Doha Tazi Hemida, and Fatima-Ezzahrae Touilila. Margaret has also read the penultimate manuscript and made constructive editorial and stylistic suggestions.

There are other individuals who offered one form of support or another. Aseel Najib lent various kinds of assistance over the past two years and compiled the main bibliography for this book. Laila Hope Mowafi tirelessly helped me secure research materials. Mohammed Hashas and Ahmad Obeidat have shared with me a long-standing interest in Taha's work, and have provided me with copies of various publications over the years. Abed Awad

facilitated contacts with the Rabat School, among countless other forms of support and assistance. Mustapha al-Murabit, Taha's close associate, has been boundlessly patient and helpful in answering my queries during the last half-decade. Humeira Iqtidar and Sudipta Kaviraj subjected the manuscript to a close reading and made a series of suggestions that helped improve the book. To all these students, colleagues, and friends I am profoundly grateful.

Last but not least, I owe an immense debt to *Mawlānā* Abdurrahman Taha himself, who read the penultimate draft and graciously responded to it in what is now an appendix. I have summarized his response and offered my own critique of it in chapter 2, section 4, but will leave the final judgment of my debate with him to the reader. It is not out of place to mention here that at the end of his response, Taha seems to have felt compelled to make a correction to the way his name has been cited in all publications, including his own. I learned from the response that his last name is Taha, not Abdurrahman, and find it felicitous that he chose to make a global correction through this book.

Reforming Modernity

Introduction

I

Any self-reflective account of a system of thought must reckon with the various challenges imposed by, and particular to, that system. How does one (re)present in a single volume the complex, multilayered, and expansive ideas of an intellectual whose oeuvre extends over multiples volumes and a long career? How does an author "translate" such ideas from one cultural context to another, fundamentally different in its assumptions, presuppositions, founding principles, and outlook? What hermeneutic must be adopted to aptly convey the subtle, age-old conceptions and technical and philosophical vocabulary of one cultural group to another? These are only some of the issues that confront the scholar who attempts to bring the work of a philosopher like Taha into conversation with the established and dominant discourses of Western modernity.

A prolific writer, Taha has put out a steady stream of works since 1979. After three initial volumes on ontology and logic, he embarked in 1987 on an intellectual trajectory that has since generated twenty books, which represent, for the most part, both dense explorations of ethics and contributions to a trenchant critique of modernity.[1] His Arabic combines a mastery of modern idiom with a singularly proficient command of classical texts. And yet, he is no ordinary philologist stuck on the interpretation of passages and phrases at the expense of the larger communal and psychoepistemic matrix

that produced and was produced by the text. He is as comfortable with modern discourse as he is with the various intellectual traditions that pervaded and defined Islam in the twelve centuries prior to the colonialist encroachment on the Muslim world. His knowledge of Sharīʿa and Ṣūfism is as penetrating as his command of Islamic theology, logic, and linguistics and the Neo-Platonic and Aristotelian traditions, all of which he has made relevant to his moral philosophy and critique of modernity. In short, to read and understand Taha requires, at a minimum, a fairly intimate familiarity with these complex traditions, and no less with the wide-ranging discourses of a host of mostly twentieth-century Muslim intellectuals and "reformers."

As rooted as his work is in the Islamic tradition past and present, Taha is also one of the shrewdest observers—and *consumers*—of European and Euro-American intellectual output. He is at home with Hume and Kant, as well as with more contemporary thinkers like G. E. Moore, Jacque Ellul, and Jürgen Habermas. His repertoire of authorial invocations and critical engagement is vast—from Plato and Aristotle to Aquinas, Hobbes, Shaftesbury, Rousseau, Hegel, Tocqueville, J. S. Mill, Durkheim, Weber, Levinas, Derrida, Carl Schmitt, Paul Ricoeur, Freud, Lacan,[2] and John Rawls.[3] In this respect, his method of harnessing the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment traditions is remarkably akin to that of the fourteenth-century Ibn Taymiyya, who, for the sake of deploying his devastating critique of Aristotelian logic, first digested virtually the entire range of logical, philosophical, and *ṣūfī* traditions, capitalizing on their internal critiques and augmenting them with his own astounding erudition, before turning all this back against the very tradition that had produced this type of logic.[4] For his part, and despite his conscious and determined refusal to disconnect the premodern intellectual productions of Islam from his systematic exposés (a position he calls *waṣl*, in contradistinction to *faṣl*),[5] Taha rarely allows this tradition to escape without deploying against it a critique of his own.

II

It is my contention that for us to understand Taha's philosophy, to understand his place in the genealogy of Arab-Islamic thought and in modernity at large, we must first comprehend the historical conditions of possibility that make his project intelligible. Just as a Michel Foucault or a Carl Schmitt

cannot be taken for granted as a specifically historical-intellectual phenomenon, neither can Taha. Foucault and Schmitt are obviously as much products of a particular age dominated by unprecedented structures of power as they are its manifestations. If Foucault taught us how to analyze systems of power, it is because the last three or four centuries produced a systemic biopower that placed a demand on us to make intelligible a new form of subject—the essence of his project.[6] Likewise, if Schmitt articulated a sinister distinction between enemy and friend, and identified the state of exception, it is because we have come to inhabit and witness a new age of the political, one that produced our need for a Schmitt in the first place. And just as there could have been no Schmitt or Foucault to come out of sixteenth-century Europe, let alone before, no Taha could have emerged in the early or mid-twentieth century. Which leads us to ask: What made this philosopher, as philosophical phenomenon and temporality, possible in the first place?

To begin to understand Taha's project, we have to revisit the history of the early nineteenth century. Of course, the origins of the nineteenth century in Islam—as a particular human and political experience—stretch further back to a historical dualism. On the one hand, the nineteenth century represents the dying breaths of the cultural, institutional, and intellectual world called "Islam," a world that had forged a place among empires and intellectual and material cultures on its own terms. By the end of the century only a residue of this world survived. If I characterize the nineteenth century as dualistic, then I do so because I take seriously the role of the Islamic experience and its residue in the making of that century. Just as Europe had trenchant critics of the drastic changes wrought by the early modern project, the Islamic world too offered its own critical resistance to, and reflection on, modernity's onslaught.

On the other hand, as lived and experienced by Muslims, the nineteenth century brought with it a hitherto-unfamiliar form of sovereign engineering,[7] one that rapidly transformed the cultural, institutional, and epistemological landscapes of Islam. As I have shown elsewhere, the genealogy of this form of sovereign power lies in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, but the full effects of this power were to materialize in the Islamic world only after Europe had first subjected itself to its influence,[8] and after the military and administrative-juridical techniques of this power—the sine qua non of colonialism—had been perfected. In effect, it was the so-called military revolution, and the new concept of juridicality that followed on its

heels, that first made this form of sovereign engineering, this unprecedented form of colonialism, possible.[9]

There is little doubt that the century that stretched between 1826 and 1923 witnessed the major structural demolition of Islam's institutions, here expansively defined. In this period, all economic, social, religious, legal, and educational structures were either significantly or totally destroyed. The historian Ira Lapidus did not exaggerate when he asserted that "traditional forms of social solidarity" were "broken down," that "guilds disappeared; *ṣūfī* brotherhoods evaporated; migrants flooded from countrysides to cities looking for work; village communities were shattered."[10] Yet, Lapidus might as well have placed the "shattering" of village communities before the "flooding" of migrants in from the countryside, because the latter was the direct *consequence* of the collapse of the Sharīʿa-protected market at the hands of the free colonial market economy, which flourished precisely because of the economic exploitation of the colonies.[11] Among other forms of economic exploitation, the colonial theft of cotton from India and Egypt and processing in Britain's factories only to be sold cheaply in Ottoman lands led, for instance, to the collapse of the major silk industry that deeply affected the entire Ottoman society and its economy.[12]

Economic and social collapse certainly had profound and major effects on the world of Islam and its educational institutions. What should more directly concern us therefore is the wave of institutional destruction inaugurated by colonialism that culminated in an epistemic rupture—the rupture that literally annihilated the forms of knowledge Islam had known for the twelve preceding centuries (from roughly 650 to 1850). Taha, like other contemporary Arab thinkers, inherits the realities and dilemma of these paired phenomena. This is not the place to survey the history of this structural disfigurement in all the major polities of Islam, however, and so the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and North Africa must suffice to frame the colonial history to which Taha is an heir.

III

At the end of the eighteenth century, as a result of crushing military defeats at the hands of the Russians, the Ottoman Empire undertook a wave of military reforms, which appeared to achieve their desired results in 1826. The

same year, the Ottomans embarked on a course of reform unparalleled in the entire legal and educational history of Islam. Once the traditional army units had been eliminated, the Istanbul government decreed that the major *waqf*s of the empire were to be placed under the control of the new Imperial Ministry of Endowments, which meant that within a few years the incomes of these *waqf*s were to be siezed.[13] The magnitude of this event should not be underestimated. For centuries in Muslim lands, the institution of *waqf* had effectively cemented the relationships between and among the human, physical, educational, and economic elements within society and, to some extent, polity. A thoroughly pious institution, *waqf* meant offering aid and support to the needy; it formed the substrate and matrix of philanthropy in Islam, playing an important, if not central, role in the redistribution of wealth. Through *waqf*, the well-to-do gave up their property "for the sake of God," a pietistically charitable act that meant offering aid and support to the needy, among other segments of society. This form of charity was defined in a broad sense and ordained by the Qur'ān *as integral to the ethical formation and constitution of the individual.* It also provided for distribution of wealth within the family, affording care for its members, and preventing the fragmentation of family property.[14]

The promotion of education through *waqf* represented one of the best forms of engaging in good works, essential for Islam's social welfare and ethos of cultivating the moral technologies of the self. Education and cultivation of knowledge in Islam were not just vocations; they were acts of piety and devotion, ethical engagements par excellence. A considerable proportion of charitable trusts were thus directed at *madrasa*s (colleges), although *waqf* provided significant contributions toward building mosques, colleges, ṣūfī orders, hospitals, public fountains, soup kitchens, travelers' lodges, street lighting, and a variety of public works, notably bridges.[15] The list of social services provided for by *waqf*s is expansive. A substantial part of the budget intended for such philanthropies was dedicated to the maintenance, daily operational costs, and renovation of *waqf* properties. A typical *waqf* consisted of a mosque and rental property (e.g., shops), the rent from which supported the operation and maintenance of the mosque and its *madrasa*, including professorial salaries and "dormitories." The volume of property dedicated to *waqf* across Islamic regions is staggering. It is estimated that by the eighteenth century, more than half of real property in the empire was consecrated as *waqf.* Depending on the region, an estimated 40 to 60 percent of all

real property across the Islamic world was constituted as *waqf* by the time Europe began its colonialist ventures.[16]

By the nineteenth century, an increasingly centralized government in Istanbul (and in Cairo under Muḥammad ʿAlī) had become the "middleman" who secured considerable profits in the process of collecting the revenues of the endowments and then paid out dwindling salaries for the minimal upkeep and operation of the *waqf*-foundations. The back payments to the educational sector progressively declined, reaching a near zero point by the middle of the 1850s. *Waqf* money—which for centuries had belonged to the autonomous *waqf*s, which used them for their own operations and fulfillment of their mission—was now diverted to military and other state-building projects, such as railways through which the grip of the central government over the periphery was enhanced. *Waqf* property, and the institutions it supported, including those of the Sharīʿa, began to fall seriously into ruin. Far from being a unique Ottoman phenomenon, nearly all Islamic regions suffered a similar fate. In fact, the French campaign against Algerian *waqf*s—a campaign designed and rationalized by French colonialism and its handmaiden, the French Orientalist establishment—was the model that the Ottomans were forced to emulate.[17]

The salarization of *waqf* administration constituted the first step toward the salarization of the entire legal profession, a campaign that took effect in the wake of the Edict of Gülhane in 1839. There was also a series of important legal reforms that aimed at instituting new policies for judicial appointments, including entry exams, and the regulation of court practices. In this flurry of reform, a spate of Islamic laws and customary practices were rapidly replaced by European codes implemented by new European-style institutions and modes of operation. Within decades, a relentless policy of demolish and replace had rendered the Sharīʿa no more than a fading memory.

New European courts, exogenous legal codes, new European schools, and conceptually foreign European administrative and other institutions came to displace almost every sphere that the Sharīʿa, Ṣūfism, and their related institutions had occupied. The effect of these "reforms" was not merely to displace the Sharīʿa and the "traditional" institutions of Islam, nor was it just to secularize them; it was *to create a new subject*, one who would see the world through the lens of the modern state and the nation. The "reforms" constituted the effective means of accomplishing "order," "regularity," and

"law," all of which stood in opposition to the steadily diminishing Sharīʿa culture, which was perceived as lacking on these counts. They imposed a reg-imenting practice, and reflected highly modern notions of discipline, law, inspection, and incarceration.[18]

As intimated earlier, the French led both the substantive and the ideo-logical attack on the *waqf*. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they had managed to break up the Algerian legal and *ṣūfī* classes, reducing the traditional legal system and its education to a marginal position in a near-exact parallel with the Ottoman scene (for both arenas of displacement were the result of the same ideological campaign). The Moroccan Rif was soon to follow. Deprived of their resources due to the expropriation and centraliza-tion of *waqf*s and to various French administrative and educational reforms that changed the structure of the Sharīʿa, the *ulama* (as well as the Ṣūfīs) were subjected to a qualitative diminishment in the very pedagogy and herme-neutical practice that defined their functions. As happened in other colo-nial contexts, the socioepistemic mechanisms that reproduced the legal pro-fession largely ceased to exist, and in its place a European system of legal reproduction was installed, with new courts, new types of jurists, and an unprecedented phenomenon of lawyering.

All this is to say that a new epistemology had emerged, a new way of not only conceptualizing the world, but also living in it.[19] The death of ʿilm-education, of the traditional scholarly circle (*ḥalaqa*), and of the *madrasa* signaled the effective extinction of an entire sociology of knowledge, of a hermeneutic that governed the production of a particular kind of knowledge. The destruction of this system was so colossal that one is compelled to describe it as a *structural genocide*, the annihilation of an entire apparatus of knowledge understood as both a system and a particular way of living in the world.[20] It is important to recognize that while Orientalism was instru-mental in this new formation, it was nothing more than a handmaiden—an arm, so to speak—of the larger European *discursive formation* that operated as a totality on what we call the Orient.[21]

With this structural genocide came the extinction of a particular, per-haps even a unique, form of psychoepistemology,[22] one that entailed not only a way of learning and passing down knowledge, but also a deliberate way of living reflectively and of acting with particular intent—activities that formed the subject. *In other words, this was the death of a habitus, of a particular way of honing the self within a communal and socioepistemically shared environment, with*

its own doxa and fairly unique assumptions. When Ṭabarī wrote his books, the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā their epistles, and Nawawī his lengthy treatises, they were writing within a particular habitus and milieu for the benefit of audiences, societies, and communities who regarded their works, albeit each within its own genre and lineage, as tradition-based productions on a continuum. These and similar works could be deciphered within a hermeneutic tradition that went all the way back to the second Islamic century, if not right to the very Qur'ānic and Prophetic beginnings. Any historian worth their salt will immediately recognize the rupture that the nineteenth century brought with it, in that around the middle of it all such works—in terms of sheer content, epistemic construction, and style—ceased to exist. There was no jurist writing in 1900 who could have continued in the same tradition that the distinguished Ḥanafī jurist Ibn ʿĀbidīn (d. 1836) worked within just seven decades earlier. One could even be justified in labeling the towering Bājūrī (d. 1860) as a hybrid, however much his work remained anchored in the historical Shāfiʿī tradition.

Likewise, by 1900 or thereabouts, there was not a single ṣūfī master, an Adab writer, a Qur'ān commentator, a Ḥadīth specialist, a Mutakallim, or a metaphysician left who could operate and produce works within the relevant tradition that had thrived only a century earlier. For the forms of knowledge and the modalities of their production have undergone a profound change, not least due to the hegemonic influx of Western modes of thought. When Faraḥ Anṭūn published his *Ibn Rushd wa-Falsafatuhu* (*Averroes and His Philosophy*) in 1903,[23] it was effectively the first work of its kind in what was emerging at the time as the "Arab world." Influenced by the writings of Ernest Renan and other Orientalists, Anṭūn wrote about Ibn Rushd from within an emerging national and cultural landscape (and, needless to add, in defense of the rationalism of Islamo-Arab culture) but he did so from outside the traditional Rushdian philosophical tradition, or any other. For Anṭūn the "Arab," Ibn Rushd was as much an "other" as he had been for Renan himself. Arguably, Anṭūn's Ibn Rushd was none other than Renan's Averroes, not the Ibn Rushd Muslims had known during the seven centuries prior. Likewise, Anṭūn's reason for writing, as well as for his coverage, argument, and analytic mode, was all unprecedented, echoing Renan's Orientalist take on the philosopher.[24] It should not surprise us, then, that somewhat later the distinguished modern philosopher ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī would scorn the nineteenth-century Muslim authors for their lack of depth: Badawī

apparently failed to recognize the shift in the nature of intellectual produc-
tion as the breakdown of the epistemic system in its entirety.[25] If all this is
not indicative of an epistemic rupture and paradigmatic shift par excellence,
then I do not know what is.[26]

<div style="text-align:center">IV</div>

We would be entirely amiss to view Taha and every other modern Arab and
Muslim thinker outside of this rupture, one that categorically governed all
discourses in what is now modernity. Whereas invocations of heritage and
traditional forms of thought are common to all modern traditions, from cur-
rent Chinese and Indian discursive forms to those squarely lodged within
the European Enlightenment, the modern Muslim case is *particularly remark-
able* in its dealings and interactions with so-called tradition, now termed
turāth (a neologism that is by definition unknown to Islamic languages prior
to the nineteenth century).[27] I say "particularly remarkable" in a sense quite
different from that advocated by many influential voices. The latter are sum-
marily captured in the metaphysical language of ʿAbd al-Ilāh Bilqazīz, who
recognizes that attachment to tradition is characteristic of all "historical
societies," including the Indian and Chinese, but that Arab society is
"opaquely historical" due to the "density of feeling that it possesses toward
maintaining a continuing connection with its past," so much so that "it
relives its past in its present, which is to say that it lives its present as if it
were an uninterrupted and unhalted continuation of its past."[28] This more
saturated relation to history that Bilqazīz ascribes to Arab society is a meta-
physical attribution because in it "the feeling of density" becomes the first
cause, the unmoved mover. I say "particularly remarkable," by contrast,
because the concept of *turāth* in modern writings has evolved within a cul-
tural milieu whose discursive and institutional architecture was originally
governed by what might be called a structure of history governed by ethi-
cal time, a time at variance with, if not in opposition to, modern notions of
progressive, linear, and materialist historical time.

I have said much in two earlier works in exposition and critique of what
I call the theology of progress.[29] Specifically, I have argued that the desig-
nation of the modern concept of progress as theological is justified by the fact
that this concept is anchored in a trenchant ideology that is metaphysical

in nature, yet bereft of any nonmaterialist foundations. The designation, due to constrictions imposed by "legislated language" (to borrow Nietzsche's terms),[30] is admittedly not wholly accurate, for theology proper, being exclusively intellectual in nature, is more coherent and thus less inconsistent internally than the theology of progress. I have also emphasized, after numerous major critics, the force and power that this theology has exercised on modern minds, making it, in this specific sense, the most hegemonic modern belief.[31] As Robert Nisbet pointed out long ago, progress is not just "one of the hardiest of Western ideas and values"; in fact, "no single idea has [ever] been more important in Western civilization."[32]

With European colonialist expansion and the spread of hegemonic power over the Orient, this idea stood front and center in Western discourses, exercising influence on Muslim thinking probably as early as the first quarter of the nineteenth century, but certainly during the third.[33] We find it militating in the thought of writers as early as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Faraḥ Anṭūn, and Muḥammad ʿAbduh. I say militating, not totally dominating, because these thinkers and their successors—down to Taha—operated under the weight of their own *turāth* as well. It is in this sense that modern Arab-Islamic thought is perhaps unique in its dealings and interactions with its cultural historical legacy. This thought, as the stock of reactions emanating from the Muslim world in contradistinction to Chinese, Indian, and other reactions, was, so to speak, between a rock and a hard place. And it did so somewhat more acutely, as I will argue, than its Asian others. The *turāth* imposed on its legatees what I call a theology of ethical reversion, a theology of such force and power that it is impossible to find a single ardent Arab or Muslim secularist, or even atheist, who could avoid or afford to neglect a confrontation with the issue or "problem" of *turāth*. If we take this theology of ethical reversion as the "rock," then the "hard place" is the modern theology of materialist progress—a theology of at least equal power but uniquely pernicious hegemonic effect.

Of course, the reader might attribute negative connotations to the designation of "ethical reversion" (perhaps even more so in the case of other candidates such as "ethical regress"),[34] which is compelling proof of the power that the theology of progress has over the modern mind. Reversion, like regress and atavism, in modernity has come to stand as anathema. To the modern mind (and here the singular form is not inappropriate), ethical reversion represents, at best, a skewed vision of the past and, at worst, a

disease, nostalgia,[35] an irrationality. As I have argued elsewhere, wherever and whenever there is a charge of nostalgia, a theology of modern progress is virulently present.[36] The "clinical condition" of nostalgia has its origins in early-modern European soldiers fighting wars far away from home, those conscripts who felt longing for their families and villages and towns, longing so acute that it debilitated their mandated military prowess.[37] Here, the normative power of excessive militarization literally created an abnormality, a clinical disease, out of the most natural form of human feelings. Ever since, modernity has continued to elevate this pathologizing attitude toward longing to a state of art.

The pull of ethical reversion or regress in modern Islamic thought, though never defined or identified in any analytical manner, has also had the same effect on commentators studying or writing about so-called Islamist movements and their discursive representatives, who are routinely portrayed as anomalous for looking into the past for ethical guidance. The negativity is bolstered by the amalgamation of this ethical component with trenchant elements of the political, in its most virulent Schmittian forms. Taken politically, this is no doubt a major dilemma, but it is hardly an intellectual one. The theology of ethical reversion must first stand, as an analytical category, on its own. For instance, in Sayyid Quṭb, to some extent, and in Shukrī Muṣṭafā, quite forcefully, ethical reversion acquires an explicit Schmittian form of the political. But in Aḥmad Amīn, Ṭāha Ḥusayn, M. Arkoun, M. A. Jābrī, A. Oumlil, G. Ṭarābīshī, Nāṣīf Naṣṣār, Taha, and countless others, ethical reversion analytically functions outside of, and in explicit antagonism to, the political. It would not be an exaggeration to say not only that the majority of Muslim and Arab intellectuals had, as I stated, to confront the *turāth* and its pervasive ethical power, but that they did so in conscious, if not radical, avoidance of any form of complacency with *this* kind of politics.

But what is this theology of ethical reversion? In modernity, the theology of progress constantly points to the future as the site of a better life. To the critical eye, this conception might look like a secularized substitute for Christian salvation. Yet, whereas the Christian believer might die thinking she had secured a place in the promised afterlife, the modern secular and atheist subject never gets that far. Progress always promises a prospect that the subject believes in and yearns for but never attains. Which is to say that progress's promises are not just open-ended, but are a mirage. The yearning engendered by progress is and can never be fulfilled. Because it is

profoundly materialistic, the theology of progress is ethically constrained and consequently cannot deliver on the ethical and spiritual, not even on the social.

Ethical reversion, on the other hand, both dominated and saturated what Marshal Hodgson called "the venture of Islam," from beginning to end. Indeed, this "venture" had a trajectory quite antithetical to the modern theology of progress. It did not look to the future as a distinct temporal category, but instead to the past as an ethical exemplarity. Yet, this past is neither linear nor cyclical; nor does it derive its moral justification from establishing an order according to which a successive chain of events *causally structures a teleology.* The Muslim past was ethical time devoid of an intermediary structure. It was a direct, unmediated link between the subject and his constructed ethical exemplarity. This ethical time cannot accommodate racial evolution, national and nationalistic trajectories, or a civilizational march, all of which are fundamentally political and efficiently colonialist, not ethical, ventures. Islamic ethical time was personal, private, and intellectual, even when it was harnessed by political theorists and mirror-for-princes writers,[38] those who came closest to the juncture of politics and ethics. That it was integral to "tradition" as a modus operandi is doubtless, but ethical time and ethical reversion are concepts that govern tradition and guarantee its ethical epistemology.

It is therefore insufficient to claim that the Islamic tradition(s) of Islam are characterized by, and rooted in, styles of authenticating the statements of the past, particularly those of the Prophet. Nor is it accurate, because it is only partially true, that these traditions articulate authority and evaluate claims to such authority by affirming their connectedness to the past. Nor, still, is it any closer to a sound description to say—as Alasdair MacIntyre and after him Talal Asad do—that traditions are constituted within "a history of (rational) argument and debate over certain fundamental doctrines in shared languages and styles of discourse."[39] All this seems true enough, but what is missing from this picture is the central nerve that produced the conditions of possibility for such a system of tradition. If, as William Graham claimed, Muslims anchored their tradition in past authority in a "more pervasive" manner than other cultures or religions have done, then the explanations proffered cannot be claimed to have successfully answered the question of why. It is only through taking seriously the concept of ethical time and the inextricable interconnectedness between Fact and Value and

Is and Ought that this tradition can be fully comprehended. One might even put the matter in more drastic terms to convey the point: the entire apparatus of Prophetic ḥadīth and of the Qurʾānic pull and the very concept of discursive authority are *only the modalities* of conveyance, but hardly the ultimate force of signifiers and points of reference that constituted this "tradition." For every reference to ḥadīth or the Qurʾān is a reference to the stubborn insistence on the unity of these signifiers. That this feature of tradition has been missed by Graham, Asad, and several others is testimonial to the domineering presence of the modern normativity that takes the distinction between Fact and Value and Is and Ought for granted. The exception to this normativity (e.g., Islam) does not then seem amenable to an explanation that assumes the very distinction to be highly problematic and outright arbitrary; hence, the suppression of the real anchors of the authority that the Muslim tradition sought to constantly reproduce. To cast the analysis of tradition in these terms is to refuse the normativity of the very epistemology that warranted the explanation in terms of authority in the first place; it is to render this very explanation as a historicized phenomenon that itself stands in need of explanation. It is, in other words, not only to provincialize it, but also to render it seriously suspect.

At the abstract and the intellectual levels, the idea of ethical reversion was framed in cosmological terms. God created the world as a hierarchical chain of being, his knowledge—by which he designed the world—being the most supreme. Divine knowledge (ʿilm), thoroughly ethical and just (ʿadl) in its constitution, permeated this chain, having assigned to humans the duty and responsibility of bearing this knowledge to the best of their abilities. Human stewardship over the material and social world thus consisted of the duty to "discover" the range and depth of this knowledge and then to apply it to their earthly environment. This is why human beings are given the status and function of God's deputies on Earth, not so much as a privilege but as a responsibility and burden—the burden to *bear that body of knowledge as ethics and justice.* The Qurʾān, deployed to humans as the agent and embodiment of the divine message, is nothing more than a command to ʿilm. ʿIlm is not only the knowledge of revelation as a worldly text; it is also, and indeed fundamentally, an unending process that engages the human mind in pondering and reflecting on God's plan and intention in the Universe. The human engagement with ʿilm is an engagement with the divine in every way, with what it means for God to create the world, and for the world to be created,

in accordance with what plan, and to what end. If true ʿilm is an exclusive property of God, and if human ʿilm is a derivative of the original, then accessing the deeper and deeper dimensions of this original is a never-ending quest—what later came to be known as ijtihād in the Sharīʿa and kashf in Ṣūfism, defining concepts and practices of Islam from centuries.

Yet, ethical reversion with its origins in divine knowledge is a rather abstract conception, certainly too vague for the derivation of practical ethics (which we will see throughout this book to be central to Islam's long history).[40] How, in other words, was this conception translated into concrete notions of ethics and moral practices? How, in yet other terms, was it translated from the cosmological to the epistemological, ontological, and deontological? The question that arose since Islam's first decades was not "Why should I be moral?"[41] but rather "How should I be moral?"

In answer to this last question, early Muslims and all the generations of the centuries that followed considered the Prophet Muhammad as the highest embodiment of ethical exemplarity because he was the earthly locus of God's message to humankind. And it is precisely because of his proximity to revelation (i.e., his relatively intimate knowledge of God's ʿilm) that the Prophet's life, as an earthly, even fallible, Sunna, acquired the status of an ethical paradigm. In Sharīʿa, misnamed "law" in Western sources,[42] he emerges as the archetypal figure whose utterances and actions provided raw materials for the construction of "legal" doctrine. This is Prophetic Sunna, a sharʿī source second only to the Qurʾān.[43]

In Ṣūfism, a central domain[44] in Islam along with Sharīʿa, the Prophetic exemplar evolved into the theory of the Perfect Human (al-Insān al-Kāmil, among other designations), who is the desideratum of pietistic life and living.[45] And if Sharīʿa and Ṣūfism are accepted as central domains, then we are compelled to accept the paradigmatic presence of this ethical exemplarity in all other supporting and peripheral domains, which ranged from Adab and history to medicine and alchemy. For in these latter two, as in mathematics, astronomy, optics, and much of the like, the idea of unraveling the secrets of the universe and its working was not, as it came to be in modernity, for the purpose of dominating and changing nature, but rather for understanding God's wisdom in devising the world, a wisdom that was taken as conducive to human efforts of replicating his knowledge, ethics, and justice on Earth.

The modern concept of *turāth* is not necessarily a direct derivative or even a consciously articulated implication of the central paradigms that governed Islam's historical experience until the nineteenth century. Yet *turāth*, as a cultural aggregate of interconnected and dialectical traditions, is undoubtedly the legacy that these domains left to the modern subject despite its imbrications in modernity and modernity's countercurrents. The domains' massive power to shape the Islamic culture—whether its subjects were Muslim or not—was able to transcend doctrinal and intellectual debates and boundaries. Their power, by definition paradigmatic, was so formative and pervasive that it created paradigmatic ways of living, however different these were from one locale to the other. *Turāth* as a *sharʿī-ṣūfī* and—later— literary legacy held a cultural sway, in partial contradistinction to religion and religious practice or affiliation. To get a sense of this cultural power, one need only observe the tremendous influence it exercised on a good number of influential Christian Arabs, from the nineteenth-century Faraḥ Anṭūn, Jurjī Zaydān, and Buṭrus al-Bustānī, down to Fahmī Jadʿān, Nāṣīf Naṣṣār, and George Ṭarābīshī. Likewise, none of the influential liberal secularizers active in the 1930s to the 1950s—the likes of ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād, Ṭāha Ḥusayn, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, and Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, among others— could construct their intellectual projects without deploying Islamic history, both religious and profane, as the defining material and subject matter of much of their work.[46] The same goes for the Arab Marxists (such as Bandalī Jawzī, Mahdī ʿĀmil, Ḥusayn Muruwwa, and Ṭayyib Tīzīnī),[47] whose concepts of materialism, class struggle, and revolution were largely sourced from within the Islamic tradition itself.

In a recent work, I have dwelt on the imbrications of knowledge and power in modernity, arguing that this essentially Foucauldian analysis is historiographically ill suited for the analysis of knowledge and political-military power in premodern Islam.[48] Since the *sharʿī-ṣūfī* central paradigms were substantively and structurally embedded in an ethical framework, they were largely unusable in the construction of the Foucauldian discursive formations, surveillance, biopolitics, and biopower. Of course, in their efforts to garner legitimacy, sultans and kings vied for the support and endorsement of the jurists and Ṣūfīs, thereby creating countless forms of patronage.[49] Yet the knowledge produced by the relevant domains could not be marshaled by rulers for the acquisition of hegemony or monopoly on surveillance. True,

knowledge in premodern Islam did unquestionably form subjects, but these were not political subjects in any modern sense, for their formation was not dictated by any *épistémè* of a political variety. To say the least, they were not amenable to the sort of *épistémè*s and discursive formations that Foucault could identify and diagnose in middle and late European modernity, which have now become global properties.[50]

Deriving from these central Islamic paradigms, the *turāth* posed a substantial problem for modern Arabs and Muslims precisely because it was undeniably anchored in an ethical substrate. One could, for instance, cite the entire intellectual projects of Jābrī and Arkoun, or those of Adonis, Ḥasan Ḥanafī, and especially Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, as emblematic of the tension, if not the so-called crisis, that is said to have ridden the back of the *turāth* as an ethical constitution. The challenge for all these intellectuals and many others was precisely to square the triangle, so to speak. The most formidable but unarticulated question they faced was "How can such an ethically constituted *turāth* be made to fit into modern knowledge, a qualitatively different kind of knowledge?" Put differently, how can an ethical knowledge that has never known any form of structural cohabitation with the political be accommodated within a modern system in which the confluence of knowledge and power becomes paradigmatic? The many failed attempts of thinkers to resolve this dilemma—albeit surely unconscious, given their inability to grasp what is really at stake—serve as a powerful illustration of the impasse.

From the beginning of the so-called *Nahḍa* in the mid-nineteenth century to the present, Ibn Rushd, the distinguished Andalusian philosopher, has continued to resurface as the paragon of rationality and rationalism in Islam, despite being only one among countless other distinguished, if not more distinguished, figures. Taken as an archetype of rationalism, Ibn Rushd dominates the writings of the nineteenth-century Christian Faraḥ Anṭūn, and more recently those of Muhammad Arkoun and of Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābrī especially. If Ibn Rushd can be revived with such force, and if the entire productions of the central domains and their formidable thinkers and intellectuals have been largely set aside as a result (as Jābrī's formidable production attests), this is a testimony to the power of *turāth* as a residue of these domains, but a residue that found embodiment in certain aspects of the living tradition.[51] To say that the revival of Ibn Rushd (like that of Ibn Khaldūn)[52] has been a sort of stratagem by which the tradition is subverted

from within the tradition itself (or, more accurately, a stratagem by which the paradigmatic tradition is subverted by means of capitalizing on figures and ideas located at its periphery) is merely to state the obvious. This sort of revival has always been as much an intellectual technique as it was a juristic one, and famously so. As early as Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), for instance, this stratagem was used to accomplish the same effects of subversion in the domain of "law." The relatively minor and juristically *marginal* concept of necessity (*ḍarūra*), for instance, was made to turn the entire legal edifice right on its head.[53]

The problem, then, is by no means a recent phenomenon. It began instead with what Stephan Sheehi rightly called the "foundationalist"[54] writings of Buṭrus al-Bustānī, the famed nineteenth-century reformer who attempted to diagnose the "causes of Arab failure" without truly understanding them. For Bustānī, as for most Arab intellectuals of his time, "contemporary Arab culture was in a state of decay (*inḥiṭāṭ*) and stagnation (*jumūd*) by the nineteenth century." His solution: "If the subject were to reawaken his desire (*raghbah*) for knowledge (*ʿulūm wa-maʿārif*), then he would be compelled to exert optimum effort (*ijtihād*, *jahd*, or *saʿy*) to acquire 'modern' knowledge."[55] But Bustānī is not alone in failing to understand what he was effectively calling for, to understand, that is, that "modern knowledge" is not a neutral project, nor is it an easy substitute for Islamic or "Arab" knowledge. He, like Anṭūn, Arkoun, and Jābrī, did not, I think, appreciate the irrelevance of Averroism to this challenge, unless, of course, the rejuvenation of Averroes was an intentional ruse (which I doubt).[56] Neither the Bustānīs nor the Jābrīs nor the Arkouns of this intellectual formation genuinely understood the quality of the problem at hand, however much pretension they arrogated to themselves as critics of Orientalism and some other forms of Western knowledge. Insofar as I can tell, the only notable exceptions in this regard are Taha, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Misīrī, and probably Nāṣīf Naṣṣār.[57] What is instructive about this "lack of understanding and consciousness," though, has nothing to do with intellectual ability or ingenuity; instead, it has everything to do with the productive power of European discursive formations. This power is productive because, in the very processes of its operation, it constructs the normal and the abnormal, the legitimate and illegitimate. And once these sovereignly determined abnormalities and illegitimacies are identified, they can be ousted from the domain of debate and even from rationality itself.

Apart from such exceptions (e.g., Taha and Misīrī), the trajectory of Arab thought on the problematic of the *turāth* has changed little from Faraḥ Anṭūn to Jābrī, regarded by many as the towering intellect of this thought today. The difference between the two thinkers, in fact, lies not so much in their respective outlooks as in the complexity and sophistication of argument in the latter, for Jābrī undoubtedly demonstrates an impressive command of the range of the *turāth*. But complexity and sophistication are hardly sufficient conditions for, or true measures of, either qualitative innovation or sagacious insightfulness and independence of mind. For Jābrī's project remains confined to a venture whose desideratum is to privilege reason—a modern, instrumentalist, and Eurocentric conception of rationality—over all other epistemic components and dimensions of intellectual heritage. An account of his project is therefore essential, not only for understanding Taha's reactions—whose chief, though initial, target is Jābrī's work—but also for making sense of the deadlock that the standard thinking on the *turāth* has created.

<div align="center">V</div>

Whereas Taha's point of departure is this deadlock, Jābrī may be said to have perfected and sealed the fate of a narrative that does not transcend the concept of instrumental and sovereign modern rationalism, a concept under attack in Western intellectual circles since Nietzsche. In his magnum opus *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* (*Critique of Arab Reason*), especially in the second volume, *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* (*The Structure of Arab Reason*), Jābrī identifies three central components of historical "Arab thought," a clearly nationalist and thus anachronistic category for which he has been much criticized.[58] Consisting of hermeneutics (*bayān*),[59] gnosis (*ʿirfān*),[60] and demonstration (*burhān*),[61] "Arab thought" is said to have suffered a crisis (*azma*) in the eleventh century due to the confluence and interaction (*tafāʿul*) between and among these three "epistemic regimes" (*nuẓum al-maʿrifa*).[62] This interaction eventually led to a situation where demonstration, Jābrī's privileged epistemic site, was sacrificed (*ḍaḥiyya*) to the legendary (*usṭūrī*), magical (*siḥrī*), and therefore irrational nature of gnosis as well as to the defective rationality of hermeneutics, *bayān*.[63] Structurally connected with language, *bayān* could not liberate itself from scriptural constraints, and thus failed to construct a

rationality independent of language.[64] In insisting on the autonomy of reason and its substantive and formal separability from linguistic structures, Jābrī not only overlooks the critical challenge a Wittgensteinian might pose to his conception, but more importantly, he ignores the ethical implications of epistemic sovereignty in comparison with what I have elsewhere called the Islamic ethical benchmark, a defining feature of these intellectual, legal, and cultural traditions.[65]

Gnosis fares even worse. Having devoted well over one hundred and fifty pages to the writings of *ṣūfī* masters, Jābrī dismisses the entire mystical tradition as an intruder on Islam, labeling it a pre-Islamic phenomenon that merely replicated itself in Islam. "The Islamic conception of gnosis is not Islamic in content, nor is it Arab in origin."[66] Being nonrational and antiempirical, gnosis squarely rests on the "conscription of the will, not on the sharpening of thought. One can even say that it rests on making the will a substitute for reason."[67] The gnostic departs from a position of "anxiety and feeling of disappointment toward the reality into which he finds himself thrown. . . . He thus finds nothing [in life] but that which annoys and embitters."[68] It is quite astonishing that a commentator on Islam, as learned as Jābrī, is able to characterize the gnostic as someone "besieged and enslaved," unable to see the world except as "entirely evil," as someone whose chief concern is the "problem of evil in the world."[69]

The summary suffices to suggest the Kantian anchors of Jābrī's project, but more specifically it also suggests the anchors that have made and continue to make of free rational will and its derivative conception of negative liberty the holy shrine of the modern subject. Jābrī's attack on gnosis would be misconceived if we were to limit it to his declared project of excavating "genuine forms of reason" in the subterranean of *turāth*. Nor is it limited to an "epistemological project" as he claims his program to be.[70] Rather, his assault on gnosis and its "slavish and besieged" mentality amounts to an attack on what I call the concept of individuated positive liberty as one of the hallmarks of Islamic culture.[71] While Isaiah Berlin's nightmare was the Soviet (and thus state-dictated) ideological conception of positive liberty,[72] Jābrī's archenemy was the *ṣūfī practice* of this liberty, one that once amounted to a full-fledged habitus.[73] His rancorous attack is of course intended to delegitimize the entire phenomenon of gnosis, but it also betrays Jābrī's unquestioned acceptance of the liberal forms of negative liberty. It is precisely at this juncture, the point where concepts of positive and negative liberties

come into a clashing encounter, that Taha's philosophy shows its dramatically qualitative difference from that of his fellow countryman. If we accept that in the matter of the formation of subjectivity positive and negative conceptions stand at the center of, and thus determine, philosophical systems, then we might say that it is precisely here that the most fundamental and crucial difference between Jābrī and Taha lies.

Furthermore, we hear nothing from Jābrī about the implications of the Western self-critique for his own project. The entire repertoire of mainly European (but specifically French) critique that Taha invokes and harnesses—a critique that was both culturally and linguistically available to Jābrī—is a black hole in his work, one that has the potential to render his entire project obsolete. There is little harnessing, if at all, of the actually and potentially powerful critique proffered by the French sociological and anthropological schools, not to mention the lasting contributions of the Frankfurt School. A sophisticated version of Faraḥ-Anṭūn-cum-Aḥmad-Amīn, Jābrī remains very much caught in modernity. But Amīn, writing several decades before Jābrī, and the even earlier Anṭūn had at least better justifications for being so caught.

There is plenty of ground on which to critique both the historiographic narratives and the structure of argumentation advanced by Jābrī. In fact, much of these narratives and a number of macroarguments do not stand up to scrutiny. Since Taha will be seen in the next chapters to unpack a number of these problematics,[74] I will not dwell much longer here on Jābrī. But Jābrī's writings seem to represent the core problems of both Arab-Islamic and Western conceptions of modernity that Taha interrogates. To better appreciate the latter's project, then, we would do well to first examine these problems as patently exhibited in Jābrī's simultaneously erudite and inconsistent *al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī al-ʿArabī* (*Arab Ethical Reason*).[75]

A central idea of this work is that "the history of ethical thought in Arab culture . . . has not been written yet."[76] This—for reasons to be made clear in due course—is a quite remarkable declaration if we consider that Jābrī had already published his encyclopedic duo *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī.* Another representative motif in *al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī*, as in others, is that "Arab culture" has suffered from a "crisis of value" (*azmat al-qiyam*) since the "Great Civil War" in 656–61, a crisis that "opened the door" to the infiltration of "foreign values. . . . that were sought as help in the conflict that produced the crisis of values."[77] Jābrī also posits that although this crisis occurred in the seventh

century, "it continued to live throughout the ages."[78] Further, he assumes that because of this crisis "religious values themselves and religion became the subject of politics."[79] "Crisis" and "conflict" (*ṣirāʿ*) thus come to not only characterize the foundations of "Arab thought"[80]—rendering them universal, transhistorical essences—but explain why this thought needed "foreign help" in the first place.

One of the foreign elements Jābrī identifies is what he calls the Persian influence. Over dozens of pages, he puts forward a biting critique of this "influence," a critique that smacks of a political, not ethical, preoccupation. In fact, reading *al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī*, it is easy to forget that Jābrī presumably intended to write a book on ethics. His condemnation of this influence, for instance, has the flavor of nationalistic chauvinism: Persian thought is deemed "negative" because it is said to have introduced authoritarianism and tyranny into "Arab thought,"[81] to have brought to Muslims "the unity of religion and state, and obedience to God and the Caliph."[82] This in turn led to "the suspension of free will" (*ḥurriyyat al-irāda*), having permitted Persian imperial values (*qiyam Kisrawiyya*) to "invade the Virtuous City," in explicit reference to Fārābī's theory of the same.[83]

In *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, we already saw Jābrī advocate for Greek rationalism, especially in its Aristotelian variety. In most of *al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī*, he pursues the same objective, arguing that whereas the Greeks grounded ethics in reason, the "Arabs" in "Islam" could not conclusively settle the issue of what foundations to adopt for ethics.[84] The reason for this indecision is that "intellectual dynamism" has been absent from "Arab thought," and this in good part is due to the Ṣūfīs[85]—a theme likewise already explored in detail in *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*. According to Jābrī, the Ṣūfīs ground their ethics in gnosis, not in rational and logical analysis. Their technologies of the self and what might be called practical ethics (*ādāb al-sulūk*, which entailed the construction of a habitus) do not, for Jābrī, constitute a theory of ethics or a rational justification of any discursive value. What matters to Jābrī, it seems, is a theory of ethics, a theoretically articulated discourse, not ethics as cultural practice, as a *social* and *applied* moral technology of the individual and communal self. To Taha, Jābrī's distinctive preference for a form of the logos over gnosis or ethical praxis (*ʿamal*) is not merely an intellectual annoyance; he sees it as symptomatic and an extension of hegemonic Western discourse that militates against robust forms of rationality, forms that situate themselves in a system of encrusted ethical value (what he calls "enhanced

rationality"). This explains why throughout his works, Taha insists on the distinction—key to his overall philosophy—between what he terms a "culture of speech" and a "culture of deed" (or praxis). (I should immediately note that I deliberately avoid the use of the term *praxeology* in the rendering of "*ʿamal*," since praxeology tends to be concerned with the study of human action and conduct. To study human action is one thing, to prescribe it as a systematic technique of ethical cultivation is another. *Praxes* is then prescriptive and performative, while *praxeology* is descriptive and analytical.)

In Jābrī's account, *ṣūfī* and Persian values were sources of misery and tyranny, which successfully vied with the Greek "values of happiness" and managed to dominate the scene until the eleventh century, when authors "belatedly" began to write "works on ethics" under Greek influence.[86] Quite late in the book, Jābrī introduces yet another retarding effect on "Arab ethics," namely, the pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arab concept of *murūʾa*, a compound and complex notion involving generosity, prudence, helping others, setting up exemplary conduct, chivalrous virtue, and the like. This he judges as effectively nonethical, because while it has the appearance of ethical conduct, it largely, if not exclusively, serves self-promotion to social rank and prestige.[87] That this "Arab *murūʾa*" was not "theoretically justified"—as Jābrī wants ethical theory to be in order to count—may, for a moment, give us reason to think that *murūʾa* lacked a technology of the self, in the sense meant by Ghazālī and Foucault. But this does not appear to be the case, for Jābrī also dismisses the *ṣūfī* way with unwavering prejudice, utterly failing to appreciate their techniques of subjectification, and much less the performative effects of these techniques.

The diminution of all but Greek ethics thus defines the core and substance of Jābrī's project. Greek ethics, he predictably tells us, "is Greek in form, but human in content." "Therefore," he continues, "one can read the title of this book as follows: *How Do We Make the Science of Ethics That Was Prevalent in, and Coming down from, Greece an Islamic Science?*"[88]

By the time Jābrī poses this key question in *al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī*, he has already expended some 570 pages (out of a total of 630) in dismissing all discourses but the Greek as unsuitable for consideration as ethical theories. Notably, he has already dismissed Ghazālī and juristic discourse much as he did the Persian, *ṣūfī*, and "Arab" elements.[89] He deems juristic discourse merely formalistic,[90] and Ghazālī's writings an opium that "had an extreme drugging

effect (*takhdīr*) on the system of values in Arab culture."[91] Given the bent of these critiques, we would expect Jābrī in the remainder of his work to show us how Greek ethics can be Islamicized.

Instead, Jābrī indulges in a relatively lengthy discussion on the Qur'ān as being the truest manifestation of ethics, since the holy book is primarily concerned with "good works" (*al-ʿamal al-ṣāliḥ*)[92] and "public good" (*maṣlaḥa*). Along with Prophetic Sunna, the Qur'ān determined "the values that have always guided the Muslim [individual] in life."[93] "Islamic ethics" is nothing if it is not grounded in "good works."[94] (Here, we can clearly witness the pull of what I have called ethical reversion, a pull that eventually trapped Jābrī in a host of paradoxes and contradictions. My point is that it is precisely because of the hegemonic indistinction between Is and Ought[95] that Jābrī's work is emblematic of much of Arab-Islamic thought since the late nineteenth century.)

Jābrī then surprises the reader further by announcing that he has finally "discovered" an author whose work qualifies as genuine "Islamic ethics."[96] (No less surprising is the fact that at this point in the book [pp. 593ff.], "Arab ethics" and "Arab thought" are now exchanged without explanation for "Islamic ethics" and "Islamic thought," respectively.) This "discovered" author is none other than the distinguished jurist al-ʿIzz Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām (1181–1262), whom Jābrī considers, like Shāṭibī, "a Maghribī in [genealogical] origins" although he was born in Damascus.[97] Of course, Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām's fierce opposition to, if not command over, the Mamlūk sultans makes him a favorite of Jābrī, since this jurist, by standing up to the sultans, exhibited a remarkable resistance to "Oriental despotism," a notion pervasively implied in Jābrī's work. But the main reason for installing this particular jurist as the paragon of ethical discourse is because his work adequately theorized both good works and public good, which were Qur'ānic principles in the first place. Why the Qur'ān itself, with all of the rich exegetical tradition that Muslims produced around it, doesn't count as an ethical theory in its own right—as the *fiqh* does—is a question that Jābrī does not ask. In other words, why get to the Qur'ān by way of Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām? Nor does Jābrī ask what distinguishes Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām from the many other jurists who came before and after him, jurists whose works exhibited similar—if not more considerable—contributions to "law," ethics, and much else; this is another question that escapes Jābrī. Instead we get a patent contradiction: "Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām's uniqueness and originality are clearly demonstrated in [the fact]

that he caused a final and radical rupture with this Greek structure, adopting an Islamic structure instead."⁹⁸

Jābrī's bone of contention with the tradition has been that in Islam or "Arab thought" "ethics did not stand autonomously but was continuously affiliated with *fiqh* [in particular] and sciences of religion in general."⁹⁹ Accordingly, and if we were to take this last assertion seriously, Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām's work, as an ethical project, would not fulfill Jābrī's stipulated condition, because he was a jurist, lived as a jurist, and wrote within a long and established juristic tradition, with all that means in terms of its hermeneutical production and association with Ṣūfism and much else. We then return to square one, to ask: If the entire range of juristic and *ṣūfī* discourses, influenced as they were by Greek, Iranian, and several other sources, was the site of ethical theory, ethical discourse, and ethical practice (a habitus, in effect), then why does Jābrī problematize the issue in the first place?

It seems to me that it is difficult to escape the inference that Jābrī formulated a clearer conception of the issues entailed in his book only *after* he had completed most of the work, hence his needless excursus on Greek ethics and the contradictions it entailed within "Arab" thought. I think he realized, belatedly, that "ethical theory" in the Islamic tradition is thoroughly embedded in the range of "disciplinary" discourses, including Kalām, Falsafa, Fiqh, Uṣūl al-Fiqh, Adab, and much else. In each of these, ethics acquires a variant incarnation, sharing much with its sister variants in other fields of inquiry and practice. That is what Jābrī missed in his *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, and what he realized he had missed only toward the end of *al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī al-ʿArabī*. It is this "discovery" that compelled Jābrī to call his project in this latter work "an adventure" (*mughāmara*), an admission that he makes near the end of the work and in the introduction (likely written last).¹⁰⁰ That Jābrī—with all his philological and intellectual weight—egregiously erred in his vision is nothing short of a remarkable index of the tension that modern Islamic thought experiences between the ethical pull of *turāth* (represented in the Qurʾān, Sunna, Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, and countless other repertoires of sources) and what Taha calls the "denuded rationality" of the West (seemingly represented in Jābrī's work by Greek rationalism).

It has been argued that modern Arab thought "articulates a subject who perpetually recognizes a master of knowledge that precludes itself," and that this amounts to a construction of the self "as Other[,] where the European self-mediates the relationship between knowledge and Arab selfhood." It is

only this "supplemental mediation of the European self [that] can bestow knowledge, and thereby mastery and substantive presence, to the modern Arab."[101] While this is undoubtedly true, it is only one side of the coin. The other side stands in great tension with this vision, for, as we saw in Jābrī's *al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī al-ʿArabī*, there are two selves at work: a European secular self and an Islamic ethical self whose genealogy and thought structure originate in a nonanthropocentric and nonsecular deeper self—a self that consciously rejects negative forms of liberty and embraces robust, but stateless, positive forms.[102] Jābrī's work, the culmination of a current that began with Buṭrus al-Bustānī and Jurjī Zaydān, and continued with Aḥmad Amīn, Ḥasan Ḥanafī, and many others, ought to be seen not merely as the production of an individual thinker, but rather as an intellectual blueprint, or a structure of thought, that brings to the fore a ripe form of this dualism. Jābrī's *al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī* is perhaps the most forceful and eloquent representation of this binary dualism, one that Taha categorically rejects in favor of an exclusive adoption of an ethical Islamic self. While this exclusivity may not be unique, Taha's articulation of this idea in the form of a robust philosophical system is.

It is precisely this binary dualism that gives Taha's project its conditions of possibility. He appears at a point in late modernity where the fissures and cracks in the modern project have allowed a return of the ethical, which arrives bursting through these cracks without permission to enter. If Europe's hegemonic liberalism and secularism came to blot and obliterate Islamic values between 1850 and 1950, and if political Islamism appeared as a misconceived reaction to the problems of colonialism and hegemony, then Taha's philosophical project is the synthesis that comes after but rejects both the thesis (colonialism) and antithesis (political Islamism). Ultimately, his is a temporally modern project that attempts to resuscitate and harness Islamic ethical time for what we can easily describe as a postmodern critique, an ethical philosophy par excellence.

VI

Like the works of all systematic philosophers, each of Taha's books is constructed around a particular thesis, which is then broken down into a chain of subtheses, each supported by arguments divided into further arguments

and sub-arguments, ad finitum. His discursive modus operandi is thus pyramidal in form and structure. The more he writes about a matter, the wider the base of argumentation becomes, if for no other reason than to substantiate an assumption or refute a possible objection. His style combines the discursive and dialectical, whereby a constant synthesis is struck between explanation and elaboration, on the one hand, and a dialectical engagement with what appears to be a hypothetical interlocutor, on the other. While this interlocutor is often difficult to uncover in premodern Islamic texts, Taha's contemporary intellectual contenders are relatively easy to identify. At times, he mentions them by name, but even an absence of identification cannot hide the intensity of engagement or the dialectical energy he pours into what he calls *ḥiwār* (dialogue, debate). This latter becomes one of the cornerstones of his philosophical-ethical project, constituting not just a modality of communication—in the Habermasian mode—but also a *substantive* technology that *performs* the subject.[103] For *ḥiwār* is not just an ethical engagement, but also one that presupposes an ethical subject who is trained to bank on praxis as a mode of epistemological production.[104]

In presenting Taha to the English-speaking reader, I had to make difficult choices. Within the scope of a single monograph, I could only hope to capture the main contours of his arguments, having been forced at times to abridge them or overlook subarguments that are of a secondary nature. This is therefore by no means a complete account of even the texts that I analyze and summarize here, much less of his system of thought that seems to grow exponentially.[105] The primary aim of this exercise is to present the main, and what I consider the most central, themes of his philosophy. As a critic, I engage with Taha on a number of major points, but it is not the purpose of this work to offer a critique so much as "a reading" of his oeuvre.

But "reading" is never an innocent exercise. To distill several substantial and complex volumes into this monograph, I have chosen to present Taha selectively, while simultaneously maintaining a close watch on the unifying argumentative structure of each of the books I have chosen to analyze. Nonetheless, it was often the case that I was forced to make omissions of detail that were dictated by limitations on space and other practical considerations, which is to say that acts of economy and selective appropriation do not just come down to subjective preferences, but rather determine my representation as a particular act of interpretation. At times, I also elected to present no more than an outline of certain arguments, leaving

much of their justification out of my narrative. When I did so, I signaled my economy of exposition when necessary by noting that our philosopher has expounded on the issue at hand in some detail.

While attempting to maintain a balance between crude abridgement and excessive detail, I also opted for what I call a discursive exposition, minimizing my reliance on its synthetic counterpart. A synthetic exposition—while an economic and easier way of writing an accessible introduction to his ideas—is, by its very nature, incapable of showing the *modes and processes of arguments* he adopts, leaving much of the form out of the picture. On the other hand, a discursive exposition allows the reader to follow Taha's train of thought, to see how he permits his arguments to unfold and how he engages with his subject matter through detailed processes and deliberate modalities. In other words, I did not think it sufficed to present the content of his thought and deploy critique where necessary; I also wanted to portray the *modes* of his arguments and the manner in which his discursive strategies evolve. On the whole, I think, a discursive exposition has the advantage of shortening the distance between the reader of this book and Taha's own writings.

Taha's explicit and declared purpose is to construct an Islamic philosophical system that answers new and old questions that have been posed within the century-old debates over *turāth* and modernity. His project, requiring as it does the production of a *systematic* body of thought, must begin from the beginning, from an examination of the particular givens (*musallamāt*) that constitute philosophical assumptions. A hybrid in every sense of the term, his system fittingly begins with a choice of a lexical repertoire that represents a new blend of ideas—ideas that neither the classical intellectual Islamic traditions nor modern discourse can provide.[106] For instance, the appearance in modernity of a new form of theology—such as political theology—makes for a fruitful field of comparison with Islamic theologies, be they the legacies of Kalām or Ṣūfism.[107] An extensive engagement with this philosophically productive comparison, which is largely unprecedented in today's Islamic world, demands a lexical and technical philosophical repertoire of its own. This is to say that new or preexisting, but revised, concepts, in order to be distinguished from the prevalent, if not customary, meanings of existing concepts, needed to be renamed and redesignated, so that even partially revised concepts could acquire new identities and thus be expected to do a particular analytical work.

Therefore, to engage with Taha is also to reckon with the challenge of a new philosophical dictionary. A flavor of this challenge can be seen—again in the context of secular and religious theologies—in the constant distinctions he makes between them, with each theology yielding its own terminological denomination. The Islamic conception acquires a distinct meaning in light of its Enlightenment other, and so the term *tashhīd*, for instance, is coined to convey specific characteristics that distinguish it from *taghyīb*, the practices of the secular other.[108] Needless to say, Taha is fully aware that, substantively, the other of Enlightenment secular theology is the pervasive *tashhīdī* conception of the world, a conception that Islam and its Afro-Asian associates have produced and harnessed for centuries before the rise of modernity. The point is that, for Taha, any difference or differentiation (*farq*) in the connotations of an idea requires coining for it a distinct term of designation, since any change in the constitution of a concept requires revised modalities and processes of philosophical expression. Language is not just a vehicle for expressing thought, nor is it just a means of formulating ideas; rather, language constitutes thought. It is never neutral. Taha views this conception of language as particularly crucial for the construction of a genuine and original Islamic system of thought, a conception that simultaneously averts the hegemony of European concepts and forms of knowledge.[109] This is also to say that Taha is not just engaged in the business of providing philosophical answers to crucial questions that Islam-in-modernity has raised; his project in effect sets in motion a second but equally formidable prong, namely, a philosophical lexical repertoire that functions as a productive engine constantly engaged in the generation of such answers. If language is never neutral, then each central philosophical question requires its own set of concepts and vocabulary.

Taha adopts a style of exposition that is never verbose, but it is certainly expansive and betrays a penchant for detailed and nuanced analysis. At times, and seemingly out of necessity, certain assertions are repeated, although this is often due to the intense interconnectedness of his arguments. That Taha's discourse, despite the flood of sub- and microarguments, is tightly knit goes without saying. This is perhaps why he is consistent in the practice of summarizing every chapter in his books, offering the reader a clear and logical flow from one chapter to the next.[110]

In light of Taha's mode of exposition and the penchant for coining new terms, I have attempted to capture the main arguments of his thesis

while avoiding, to the best of my abilities, indulging the reader in his torrent of fine philosophical dissections. This act of condensation performed for the sake of accessing his system's key ideas is also coupled with the omission of what I deem nonconsequential neologisms. Whenever a coined technical term does not lead to further analysis or discussion, I have also attempted to present its substance without burdening the reader with its neologism.

VII

Finally, a word about the chapters and subject matter making up this book. There are two main intellectual environments that shaped Taha's early formation, the first being the Morocco in which he grew up and to which he returned after completing his graduate education at the Sorbonne.[111] Yet this "local" experience was not of a piece. We must think of the first part of it in terms of living in a newly emerging nation-state, and specifically in the so-called postcolonial environment of El-Jadida (his birthplace [1944]) and Casablanca, where he completed his high school education.[112] The second part, after his return from France, has been dominated by his experience as a professor in the nearby city of Rabat, an experience that has shaped his reactions as a philosopher. He was one of the first, if not the first, to teach a curriculum consisting of logic and philosophy of language at the University of Muhammad V. There should have been nothing unusual about teaching such subjects, but apparently there was, judging by the isolation to which he was subjected for more than two decades in the 1970s and 1980s—the period that corresponds to his near dormancy as an author.[113] In those years, a strong Left and a stronger liberal and modernizing environment can be said to have dominated the university during the 1970s and 1980s. In his teaching, Taha combined logic and philosophy of language with a considerable dose of ṣūfī thought and its philosophy of praxis, drawing on almost a millennium's worth of thick and extensive ṣūfī traditions in Islam. This combination made him a unique voice, which for a long time consigned him to isolation and provoked against him subtle forms of discrimination, if not condemnation. It is no coincidence that one of the most powerful figures in this environment was Jābrī himself, who does not seem to have extended any support to his junior colleague. But isolation seems to have strengthened

Taha's resolve rather than weaken it, as evidenced in his formidable intellectual output after the mid-1990s.

The second environment is Paris, where he studied a long and extensive range of classical Western philosophers and Enlightenment thinkers. It would be a mistake to consider this experience less formative and powerful than the years spent in his native country. Here, Taha does not only become a professional logician and semiotician; he begins to unravel the threads of Enlightenment thought and develop a critical system that continues to sustain his project decades later.

Taha's background helps us understand the manner in which his thought radiates through what I regard as three concentric circles. The first, immediate circle is what we can comfortably call the North African one, if by this we mean to include the intellectual currents that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. There is no doubt that the "reformist" projects in these countries, especially the first two, have been not only vast and important, but also effective in shaping the cultural scene in the region, a scene in which Taha grew up and which he has obviously experienced in intimate intellectual ways. The second is the larger Arab-Islamic circle, intellectually defined by a number of thinkers from various quarters of the Muslim world, but more specifically by the Levantine-Egyptian tradition that contributed to, and was almost exclusively responsible for, the rise of the *Nahḍa*. The third circle is Euro-American modernity, including its Enlightenment. Despite the fact that Taha has a complex, and to some extent a problematic, relationship with the Enlightenment, this third circle is the most defining of his thought, one that he never ceased to interrogate, with a view to reforming and eventually, I think, to replacing it with an ethicized alternative.

It is by keeping these circles in mind that we can understand the contours of Taha's larger project and thus the discursive strategy of the present work. Chapter 1 is then concerned with the first and second concentric circles, situating Taha's project in the arena and problematics of *turāth*, and outlining his methodological and theoretical approaches. It is here that Taha draws the blueprint of a project that continues to occupy him. Chapter 2 is concerned with what he calls the spirit of modernity, the third circle and the core of the modern project. Here, we will see both the innovative nature of our philosopher's critique and the problematics that have distressed his understanding of, and thus proposed solutions for, modernity and its

Enlightenment. In chapter 3, I focus on Qurʾānic philology and globalization as two case studies through which Taha attempts to show how his thought provides for an Islamic application of the spirit of modernity. This chapter thus reacts to and engages the preceding chapter, thereby creating a rich space for dialogue between Islam and its Western other. The theme of dialogue, I should note, recurs here, but also asserts itself throughout this book and the entire range of his works, the most recent included. Chapter 4 returns to the Enlightenment, to formulate a critique of its form and structure of rationality derived from Taha's own concepts of "guided" and "enhanced reason." These forms of reason will also be seen to derive from epistemologically prior constellations of concepts that heavily draw on Sharīʿa and, particularly, Ṣūfism. Chapters 5 and 6 continue to examine his critical foray, exploring a host of central concepts that range from religion, materialism, and secularism (or secular theology), to liberalism (or liberal theology), technology/technique, and trusteeship, among others. Chapter 6, in particular, explores Taha's systematic critique of the modern concept of politics, a critique that pulls him deeper into explorations of subjectivity, the concept of the human, of the individual, and of the ethical community.

Whether we are discussing the techniques of reason, the structure of rationality, or the "spirit of modernity," we will do well not to forget that at the basis of Taha's entire project lie the subject and the formation of subjectivity. While the Western forms of subjectification afford Taha a target of critique, his project transcends these critical boundaries in order to construct a concept of the human, along with the modalities and techniques necessary to accomplish the task. This constructive dimension, what I will call palliative, will be discussed in the epilogue, a fitting finale that brings what is at stake in his work to the center of attention.

Reflecting the development of Taha's overall ethical project, this book proceeds according to the following schema: (1) contemporary Arab-Islamic thought has mishandled the *turāth*, in good part due to its inability to carve for itself an autonomous epistemological venue; (2) a new methodology of rethinking the present and the past of this thought is a priority; (3) this methodological deadlock is due to unquestioning dependence on a misconceived Western application of modernity's spirit; (4) this spirit is otherwise universally valid and therefore transhistorical; (5) the spirit has the potential of producing multiple modernities, the Islamic being at least one; (6) prospective Islamic modernity differs from its actual Western counterpart in

its insistence on ethics as its defining feature; (7) this ethics is inseparable from religion, even politics; (8) Islam, as a revealed religion, can establish this version of modernity; (9) Islamic modernity proposes (a) corrections to Western modernity and (b) a healthier modus vivendi and modus operandi for living *in* the world, not above it; and (10) to accomplish this modernity, an essentially different concept of the human must be fostered and ultimately developed.

The project thus moves forward by anchoring itself in three major sites, which I shall call the diagnostic-etiological, the remedial-palliative, and the technological-ethical. Pertaining to the modernity we now know, the first of the trio is that problematic which needs to be either solved or, failing that, abandoned; the second consists of the desiderata that make a new concept of the human conceivable, possible; and the third prescribes the technologies required for the creation of this new subject. To be sure, "new" is my term, for Taha argues that this is not a new but rather a "forgotten" subject, one that needs to be revived and modified, but hardly invented.[114]

"Rethinking the Islamic Tradition"

A Conceptual Framework

I

In a key article published in 1996, "How Do We Rethink Tradition?" ("Kayfa Nujaddid al-Naẓar fil-Turāth?"),[1] Taha lays down the general framework for an intellectual project that he had begun in earnest at least two decades earlier[2] and that continues unabated through the present. An analysis of this piece, along with another that forms its substantive sequel,[3] will not only make for an appropriate entry into, and mapping of, his intellectual agenda, thus capturing its constitution and ambitions, but it also shows the unique style and structure of his argumentation. It also unravels the intellectual environment in which his project emerged, and the currents of thought against which he, at least initially, militated.

In a typical fashion, Taha breaks down his subject into its constitutive analytical elements. The topic of his interest, reflected in the title, thus consists of four components: tradition (*turāth*), rethinking—made up of "*tajdīd* (renewal) of *naẓar* (reasoned reflection, thinking)"—and modalities (or "howness"; *kayfiyya*) of critique. The relationship between one component and another is not a matter of spatiotemporal order, but one that is entirely logical. Accordingly, we cannot begin to speak of, or attempt to define, the "modalities" because they are logically dependent on the other components, without which the "modalities" remain boundless and nebulous. The same is the case with *naẓar*, because it is predicated on "tradition," which gives

"(re)thinking" its particular meanings and structure. The only component here that does not depend on the others is "tradition" (*turāth*), which, once defined, permits an exploration of the others on the basis of that definition. Yet, this is not to imply that "tradition" is separable from reason, but rather that "tradition" determines the contents, forms, and structures of rationality; it determines what type or quality of rationality is germane to it.

According to Taha, a definition of tradition can be reached through contrasting (*muqābala*) and particularization (*takhṣīṣ*). There are two central concepts that may be contrasted with tradition, namely, culture (*thaqāfa*) and civilization (*ḥaḍāra*). Tradition, however, is more encompassing than both of them, even when taken together. It is broader than culture because acculturation represents a formation in accordance with desirable national values (*qīma waṭaniyya*) that command observance as a matter of practice.[4] What the proposition "desirable national values that command observance as a matter of practice" effectively amounts to is "relevant values" (*qiyam muʿtabara*). In this formulation, what is undesirable is irrelevant. By contrast, it is not a condition for tradition to be exclusively a legatee of these relevant values, for it may encompass additional values that are "irrelevant," which is to say, undesirable values whose application has been annulled. This of course in no way diminishes the importance of tradition, for it is precisely because tradition contains "irrelevance"—when this irrelevance should not be an issue—that Taha favors it and gives it the weight of his theoretical attention.

Likewise, tradition is more encompassing than civilization, because the phenomenon of civilizing represents a formation in accordance with human values that are relevant, i.e., desirable values whose application is required. Accordingly, civilization is more particular than culture, because every human value is a "national value," but not every national value is a human value.[5] Again, tradition is not limited to these "relevant" human values, because it may include (additional) human values that are irrelevant, namely, values that are no longer desirable, and that have thus been abrogated or disavowed (*mulghāt*; *KNN*, 42). With this significant redefinition of concepts, Taha is opening the door to both the possible retrieval and the critique of historical forms. And it is this transhistorical thrust of tradition that allows him to privilege it as a site pregnant with critical and philosophical possibilities.

A definition of tradition must therefore be formulated without taking into account either the concept of culture or, a fortiori, that of civilization: "In general terms, the Arab-Islamic tradition represents the totality of subject matter, as well as textual and behavioural means that define the acquisitional or productive existence of the Arab-Muslim human being, according to particular values some of which remain relevant while others have become annulled, whether this annulment is undertaken with the aim of advancement or has effectively led to regression."[6] Elsewhere, another variant of this definition appears: "In general terms, the Arab-Islamic tradition represents the totality of subject matter and textual and behavioral means that define Arab-Islamic cultural existence, whether these are original texts or precepts derived thereof, whether they are written texts or oral propositions, whether apparent or hidden attitudes, whether we, individuals or groups alike, maintained it as relevant and have put it into practice or have annulled it and abandoned its application" (*UNIT*, 59). The point of this definition is clearly to reintroduce for analytical and critical consideration traditions of the recent and remote pasts, whether dead or alive; to create a dialectic between doctrine, knowledge, and theory, on the one hand, and practice and action (= the acquisitional), on the other; and finally to challenge, through the revival or modified rejuvenation of dead tradition, the theoretical underpinnings of what "civilization" and "culture" have developed.

On the basis of this definition, it is now possible to define culture and civilization. "Arab-Islamic culture represents the totality of subject matter as well as textual and behavioral means that define the acquisitional existence of the Arab-Muslim human being, according to desirable national values—namely, relevant national values—the application of which is required." ("Acquisitional" is left undefined, but in this context it clearly evokes the classical theological concept under the nomenclature of *kasb*, namely, the undertaking of acts whose omission or commission ineluctably "acquires" for the subject a certain reward or punishment. The measure of each act is an ethical consideration defined by "good works,"[7] but the totality of these acts possesses a *kasbī* formation of the ethical self. Likewise, the term *relevant* remains undefined, although it would not be an overstretch to think that it amounts to that which is "actionable" in the solution of problems facing tradition.) The definition of "Arab Islamic civilization" follows the same pattern, with the variation that the desirable, relevant values are not national

but "human" (*insāniyya*). In "civilization," we must recall, these human values are never exhaustive, since some of them, to which tradition likewise attends, remain outside civilization's scope. Clearly, this definition of civilization aims to open a space for revaluating the contemporaneous in terms of a critical reconsideration of tradition. Civilization then becomes subject to the critical force of tradition, not the other way around.

The other means of defining tradition is through particularization (*takhṣīṣ*), namely, a specific preoccupation with "textual reality" (*ḥaqīqa naṣṣiyya*), since the "traditional text" is most central "to our concerns." Yet the concept of "text" must be understood in its most expansive meaning, which "the most recent research in linguistics" has brought to the fore. Text is not just about linguistic propositions and speech; it also extends to practice, acts, deeds, and, centrally, praxis. "Acts are as much texts as speech is. The former are behavioral texts, while the latter are speech texts. The text then is an act or a speech the ultimate purpose of which is to bring to the fore the acquisitional existence of the Arab Muslim" (be it an individual or a group; *KNN*, 44). By now, we can see that for Taha "acquisitional existence" constitutes the principal arena of subject formation and the central nerve and focus of his philosophical elaborations. "Acquisitional existence" brings together "text," "speech," and "act" as dialectically contributing signifiers to what he calls ʿamal (praxis), a concept that pervasively inhabits these elaborations.

The second component of the project—as indicated by the article's title—is "thought, or reasoned thinking" (*naẓar*), which should be the object of renewal (*tajdīd*). In Taha's understanding, *naẓar* is a loaded concept whose analytical and critical boundaries exceed its common meaning. Arguably, an analogy can be drawn between the use of this concept in Taha's work and Shāfiʿī's conceptual amplifications of such cognate terms as *ijtihad*, *fahm*, and *tafakkur*, which the latter had made the foundations of a complex hermeneutic.[8] Embarking on a critique of his Muslim contemporaries and recent predecessors, Taha pits the concept of "thinking the text" against the current practices of "reading." To his mind, "reading" has been engulfed in anxiety (*qalaq*) and confusion because it is a borrowed and imported method. Here, there is an implicit reference to the reformist projects of modern thinkers such as Jābrī and Abū Zayd: "Our governing presupposition is that every importation is objectionable until its benefit is proven. And thus far, the benefit [of the importation] has not been demonstrated through a

venue independent of that which is imported." (In this observation, we can see why tradition is the widest circle of critical thinking in Taha, since it alone can provide means that lie outside of, and are thus independent of, "civilization" and "culture.") Relying on what is imported in order to prove its benefits inevitably "leads to a petitio principii" (*KNN*, 45). "Reading" is thus a matter of subjective interpretation (*ta'wīl*), which actively conflates the reader and that which is read (*al-tadākhul bayna al-qāri' wal-maqrū'*). It allows the reader to make the "text," thereby erasing the limits between the text's past and its present. Instead, the text's historical location should be compared with our present, with a view to comprehending that location according to the requirements of this present. This practice of comparison Taha calls thinking. Unlike reading, which is a largely emotive and value-laden approach, "thinking" is a rational-epistemological process. The second governing presupposition is therefore this, that thinking is an originary method that must assume a proposition to be true until the contrary—or otherwise—is proven.

All this culminates in the conclusion that *naẓar* is the epistemological framework within which theory (*naẓariyya*)—a lexical and epistemological derivative of *naẓar*—is constructed. "Theory is [a group of] statements of which some are postulated and others are derivative thereof, in such a way as to make the totality of the statements consist of a single sequence (*nasaq*) that is useful for [reaching] epistemological judgments in a particular field" (*KNN*, 46). Whereas reading is weak in theory, if not wholly antitheoretical, *naẓar* seeks to know a thing through means that may not be part of that thing. In the encounter with the traditional text (*al-naṣṣ al-turāthī*), *naẓar* represents a method that understands that text either through the text itself or through means external to it. However, when recourse is made to external means, these must meet the condition of noncontradiction, namely, they should not oppose the text's essential requirements (*lā tukhālif al-muqtaḍayāt al-jawhariyya*). It is taken for granted here that the traditional text is the totality of discourses and practices that are woven together by a structure of cohesion and signification (*ilti'ām dalālī*), which offers the Arab-Muslim subject the highest manifestation of acquisitional existence (*al-wujūd al-kasbī*; *KNN*, 46).

The third component identified by the title of the article is *tajdīd*, effectively the prefix in "*re*thinking" (amounting to "thinking *anew*" or to "*renewal* of thinking"). An essential condition for true rethinking is that it must not

presuppose or replicate the epistemological foundations of that which it is trying to rethink. Rethinking is the introduction of a new way of seeing an old issue or thing. It is turning that thing inside out or upside down. It is, in short, a process of inversion (*taqlīb* or *inqilāb*). Yet, inversion must fulfill the conditions of (1) not being arbitrary, and (2) being grounded in a specific reason or specific reasons. And since "our task" is to construct a system of *naẓar*, "our preoccupation" is not with tradition itself but with discourses that purport to examine tradition. The system amounts then to a critique of critique, or, put differently, a critique of the very structure of epistemological biases of that particular mode of questioning. Needless to say, this conception of critique is directed at modern Arab-Islamic reformist discourse that is characteristically secularist and markedly Eurocentric, tending arbitrarily to marginalize, if not disparage, the Islamic traditions (*UNIT*, 59; *HIF*, 81–85, 143–57).[9] At the top of the list of such "reformers" no doubt stand Jābrī, Arkoun, Abū Zayd, and possibly Ṭarābīshī,[10] although they go unnamed.

The fourth and most central component is the concept of "howness," that is, the modalities required to accomplish the task of renewal of *naẓar*. Which is to say that what is involved in the question "How do we rethink—or renew the *naẓar* in—the Islamic tradition?" is nothing short of an entire methodology. This compels us to rephrase the question thus: "What is the methodology that we must adopt in order to rethink tradition?" And since inversion lies at the core of this project, then two issues must be tackled: first, the necessity of showing the reasons for inverting "thinking," that is, the object of "rethinking"; and second, the necessity of identifying the principles in which the latter is grounded.

II

There are a number of reasons for abandoning the current discourse on tradition, all having to do with what Taha calls fragmenting outlooks (*naẓar tajzī'ī*). First, when dealing with the traditional text (*al-naṣṣ al-turāthī*), the current discourse has severely neglected the relationship between content and method, or between substantive conclusions and the means by which they were reached: "If the means are the raison d'être of the substantive

content and the method by which the latter was attained, then complete and thorough understanding (*taḥaqquq*) of that content cannot be had without a commanding knowledge of the means" (*TM*, 50, 54).[11] If priority is not given to means and methods over content, thinking about the traditional text will remain, as it has in modern Arab discourse, both superficial and dysfunctional.

Second, it has escaped this discourse that, neglecting the methodological means by which content was attained, has severe consequences, which extend beyond a deficient knowledge of the content itself. In the traditional text, a subtext of praxis is embedded in the very structure of propositions and judgments, which is to say that the method never abandons the function of praxis when formulating the substantive contents, conclusions, and judgments. In other words, praxis (or what we have generally come to call after Foucault "the technologies of the self") is present everywhere, even in what might first appear to be a theoretical text or an abstract intellectual conclusion. Taha might just as well have said that praxis, as well as the body that is the site of this praxis, is never far from the target and elaborations of the traditional text. Indeed, they make the text, even in its theoretical constitution. Some religious and spiritual truths "cannot be understood until *after* they have been put into practice," for "praxis (*al-ʿamal al-dīnī*) opens up corridors of knowledge that would be inconceivable before engaging [that] praxis."[12] As we will see throughout, this conception of praxis *governs* in Taha's work.

Praxis thus makes theory possible, to such an extent that the practitioner is unable to comprehend any defect in the theoretical knowledge underlying the praxis until praxis itself is either suspended or fails altogether. In other words, the failure of theory is contingent on the failure of practice. It is not therefore correct to claim that theory is the foundation and basis of praxis, making theory prior, for this would be an all-too-categorical statement that does not distinguish between necessary (*ḍarūrī*) and inferential (*naẓarī*) knowledge.[13] While the former must necessarily be recognized as a condition for praxis, inferential knowledge cannot be regarded thus, for people may engage in praxis without knowing the theoretical reasons that went into making that praxis what it is. That these reasons and the entire theoretical operation—that went into establishing the praxis—were the work of someone else (the learned, the specialist, and the like) does not take away

from the fact that the layman's praxis is not affected in the least by the absence of that knowledge. Dualistic and dialectical, discursive tradition is a mechanism for enunciation and operative praxis all at once.[14]

Taha seems to say that even the full meaning of theoretical knowledge as well as its constitutive modalities (i.e., the very methodologies and lines of reasoning leading to it) cannot be comprehended without praxis, for this latter and its multilayered processes of perfection allow for a series of distensions within theoretical knowledge. And it is precisely the paucity of this multilayered and multidimensional praxis in modern Islamic discourse that has led not only to the discourse's intellectual impoverishment, but also to a severe misunderstanding of the structural modalities behind the traditional text. This is also in effect to argue that current Islamic reformist discourse does not understand its own past, that it attempts to refashion it while being utterly ignorant of it.

The failure of current Islamic discourse to understand this dialectical relationship between theoretical knowledge and praxis in the traditional text led to severe misunderstanding of the text's contents, which is to say that the contents have been imagined (*tawahhum*) to be what they are not, because the methodological means that justified them suffered from chronic "forgetfulness." Yet, this shortcoming is neither a passing nor an accidental failing, but stems rather from a fundamental lack, what Taha calls a "deficiency in comprehending the modalities" (*al-quṣūr fī fiqh al-āliyyāt*). The deficiency is represented in the absence of command over a methodology according to which new logical and scientific procedures can yield reconceptualizations, reconstructed definitions, reformulated refutative principles and arguments, as well as the elaboration of theories and argumentative sequences (*TM*, 51).

Third, current reformist discourse has acquired the habit of borrowing foreign methods. While this, in itself, is not necessarily harmful, it cannot be undertaken uncritically. To harness methods originally established and elaborated in an altogether different cultural context requires the fulfillment of certain conditions. The most important of these is total command and profound understanding of these methods' historicity, that is, how, why, and when they originated in that context.[15] Second, the borrower must prove himself capable of engaging in a profound and comprehensive critique of the transplanted methods, so that once this critique is undertaken, the methods must be shown to retain analytical and inferential relevance for the

project. Third, transplanting these methods into the terrain of the traditional text faces the challenge of appropriateness, what might be called the test of relevance (*munāsaba*). A method might be sound, but from this judgment of soundness it does not follow that it is appropriate for all contexts or needs. Once aspects of relevance are established, a detailed and careful investigation into the successive steps through which these methods are applied is necessary. Moreover, the effects of such an application must be evaluated on their own, since a sound method may appear applicable in one context but in fact may not be appropriate or relevant for yielding the desired results in another context. In other words, the traditional text as a "cultural" production may not be amenable to such an application (*KNN*, 51–52).

It may seem at first that my analysis of the article and its schematic components is an engagement in generalities or even in vague pronouncements about the nature of Taha's project on the whole. Yet a wide reading in his work will confirm that the intellectual procedures to which he alludes here are more than adequately backed up by his extensive and detailed corpus. What is important to note at this stage is that he does not subscribe to the kind of unconscious methodology that tends to take the products of the European Enlightenment for granted, and without critical inspection. In the process of deploying his critique, he scrutinizes a wide range of writings, exempting neither the Humes, nor the Kants, nor the Habermases. The key concepts of the Enlightenment, especially those concerned with rationalism,[16] positive and negative liberties,[17] the Fact/Value and Is/Ought distinctions,[18] and an array of others, are all subjected to the test of relevance, whose outlines he sets here. Yet, it is more than just this test that is at stake. Against these concepts he marshals a number of thorough critiques, which he continues to develop in a succession of writings, critiques that far exceed the immediate concerns of that test.

Although Enlightenment critique takes up a good deal of attention in the later works, Taha's concerns in this essay seem largely domestic, mostly directed at influential intellectuals writing from his own North African context.[19] A major problem that engulfs their thinking is what he calls "the brandishing of rationalism" (*KNN*, 52–53). The vast majority of writers on tradition carry the flag of rationalism, and proclaim their projects as grounded in the rational method. Their zeal has been so intense that "one could speak of a hidden form of idolatry that equals the conventional one." It is curious,

however, that while they uphold this "rational method," no two of them could agree on the same conclusions with regard to the traditional text. "Rationalism for them is nothing more than what each of them thinks, as evidenced by the fact that their conclusions and methods contradict one another, although they all claim to be rational. . . . In their hands, rational-ism has become a homonym," if not "a legend" that exceeds in its irrational dimensions what they attach to legend itself, if not to elements of the tradi-tion (*KNN*, 53–54). A careful perusal of their writings, however, shows that they lack command of rational and logical methods, often resorting to ideas that have become dated. In this context, Jābrī is clearly the subject of Taha's methodological assault.

The fragmented and fragmenting nature of current Islamic discourse on tradition calls for a holistic approach that may require the inversion of prin-ciples and assumptions underlying this discourse, including its forms of rationality. There have been multiple claims for a reconsideration of tradi-tion, including calls to rationalize it, to purify it of outdated residues, and the like, but these all "fall under the rubric of the tired problematics of 'authenticity and contemporaneity,' 'authenticity and modernity,' or 'con-formity and innovation'" (*KNN*, 55).

For Taha, although there is a grain of truth in such claims as made on the part of reformist thinkers, they are mostly characterized by "circum-stantial hurriedness," whereby issues are conflated and distinct forms of thought are carelessly assimilated. "He who wishes to renew tradition must understand it, and he who does not understand it has no means to under-take such renewal. He who wants to rationalize it needs two things: to understand it, and then to practice it. He who does not practice it will not have an experiential knowledge of its benefits and harms, because a purely theoretical knowledge of it is insufficient . . . assuming that he is capable of attaining this knowledge in the first place" (*KNN*, 55). "Our first task in rethinking tradition is therefore not to modernize it, nor to rationalize it, but is rather an inversion of these, namely, to understand it, to develop a command of its methods, and to ascertain its contents." Once this is under-taken, we will be in a position to "construct our own judgments of these contents," which is to say that a command of the methods will permit the extraction of our own methods that comport with the spirit of tradition, and these in turn will inevitably lead us to identify the "contents" appro-priate for our age.[20]

Yet, unlike the "fragmentary outlook" that imposes borrowed methods on tradition, the "inverting methods" would be extracted from the traditional texts themselves, with a view to refashioning the standards of theoretical knowledge and denuded rationalism, a concept that Taha takes up at length in later works (discussed in chapter 4). Undertaking this inversion requires assuming and taking for granted that the various parts and divisions of the tradition are not only interconnected but mutually complementary. In all of this, both praxis and a thorough engagement with the texts of the tradition are of profound importance, for there is no rationality or ethics without them. Praxis "opens up the horizons of traditional contents, making them more intelligible" (*KNN*, 56). We will see that, throughout the range of his key writings, Taha harnesses the concept of praxis and gives it a considerable philosophical elaboration that bestows on his project a dimension largely absent from modern (Western) thought.

<center>III</center>

Departing from the foundational premise that "there is no identity without reliance on its tradition" (*UNIT*, 59), Taha proceeds to outline his approach in solving the problems that modernizing Islamic discourse has created. Instead of borrowing foreign concepts that are not likely to be relevant or appropriate for the task, the methodology and theoretical foundations of the new project must be made to derive from "our tradition" (*UNIT*, 62). Toward this goal, and to remedy the severance of method from content in modern Islamic discourse, the concept of *tadāwul* must be put into practical effect.

What is *tadāwul*? Tradition consists of three major divisions: creed, language, and knowledge. The Arab-Islamic tradition cannot become an analytically useful or productive epistemic source without engaging the three divisions as a matter of practice. They have to be consistently and critically put into practical effect. An engagement with the application of values deriving from the three domains presupposes meeting the condition that the benefits accruing from this engagement must extend to the other, as much as they are to serve the self. They must likewise serve the interests of the future—to the extent it can be foreseen—as much as of those of the present. "*Tadāwul* therefore represents the persistence of works whose benefits transcend to the other, so that it is both communicative and interactive. It is

also that which yields benefits that transcend to the future, so that it becomes both an ethical refinement and a devotional rapprochement."[21] It will become clear in the next chapter that, when Taha defines modernity, the "other" is as much the non-Muslims in the world as the "other" members of the faith. It is precisely in this context that our philosopher attempts to subvert the modalities of current materialist globalization to accomplish his ethical agenda.[22] He attempts to take Habermas's philosophy of communicative action to a new level, subjecting it to further requirements of ethical praxis, and then turns it against the amoral, if not unethical, phenomenon of globalization.

Deriving from the principle of *tadāwul*, creed—the first component of tradition—must be systematically put into practical effect, with a view to accomplishing the aforestated dualistic benefit (*al-nafᶜ al-muzdawij*). There is no meaning or import for creed "unless speech agrees with acts," unless "discourse corresponds with [practical] conduct" (*UNIT*, 63). Yet, for creed to function in this manner, it must be governed by three commanding precepts: that the Sharīᶜa enjoys primacy by virtue of divine governance; that this Sharīᶜa upholds the exclusivity of God's oneness; and that divine will over creation is absolute. At first, this stance may repel the secularist's or atheist's sensibility, but we will see Taha argue (in chapter 6), not unconvincingly, that transcendentalism is not just an Islamic or religionist quality; rather, secular Western modernity has developed its own forms of transcendence, although to effects different from those brought about by "traditional" others.[23] Modernity is just as theological as any other "religion," and its state law is just as engulfed by this theology as the Sharīᶜa was in its own theological habitat.

The second component of tradition is language, or rather the practice of language, which must also abide by the condition of dualistic benefit, that is, it must be beneficial to the self as well as to the other. But the practice of language that insists on such a condition of benefit cannot obtain without the adoption of conventional and commonly used forms of language, which is to say that the precept of benefit accruing to the other must ensue from the use of language according to the linguistic canons of that other. For the Arabic language to function in this manner, it must be governed by three commanding precepts: that it enjoys primacy by virtue of the Qur'ānic revelation; that the conventions of this language must be adopted; and that economy of expression is necessary. The first two precepts are deployed in

order to accomplish a strategic goal within the present globalized world, namely, that *tadāwul* on the global stage must reckon with an intellectual, praxis-based tradition that articulates its own concepts, both foundational and derivative, from its own soil. Which is to say, consistent with Taha's project of reform, that Islam's contributions to the correction of presently hegemonic Western modernity must begin with a global dialogue (*ḥiwār*) that is foregrounded in praxis-based technologies of ethical cultivation, technologies that are inspired by the constitutive elements of a critically adopted Islamic tradition.

The emphasis on language here is not a subjective linguistic preference, nor is it about a sense of superiority of the Arabic language as such, but rather it is about a sense of epistemic integrity that, for Taha, must maintain a certain structural continuity between traditional text and tradition-in-modernity. If language is integral to thought, and not just a mode of conveyance, then language partakes in the epistemic constitution of tradition. To put it simply, and to draw on Alasdair MacIntyre's general categories,[24] Taha is saying that a critically rearticulated version of the Arabicate tradition is intended, through his project, to provide for a rival tradition, although, as we will see, we cannot merely qualify this tradition with the adjective *rational* as MacIntyre does because Taha regards the Western concept of reason as denuded of what he regards as other essential attributes. Since rationality is culture-specific, what is rational for MacIntyre may not be rational for non-Western others.

The third component is knowledge, whose value ultimately resides in its application. For it is the practice of knowledge that justifies the search for it. If increase in knowledge is to have any justification, it is only because it enhances and increases the quality of praxis.[25] It is a foundational principle in Taha's philosophy that praxis has primacy over theoretical knowledge, and that praxis must engage in, and serve, the aforementioned dualistic benefit. In its extensions and distensions, knowledge must be subordinate to ethical ends. Yet, for knowledge to function in this manner, it must be governed by three commanding precepts: that Islamic knowledge, insofar as his philosophy is concerned, enjoys primacy over all other forms of knowledge, which is to say that the sources of knowledge for contemporary Muslim thinkers must begin with and from the *turāth* rather than posit European epistemology as the standard; that theoretical knowledge depends on praxis and practical knowledge; and that positivist reason (*al-ʿaql al-waḍʿī*) depends

on *sharʿī* reason. While the first and third of these precepts are interrelated and aim to reestablish the knowledge and practice of the tradition as the first and foremost concern, the second of the trio—the primacy of praxis over theory—seems a novelty, if not an aberration, when set against modern forms of knowledge. This rash impression, however, must be resisted, for modernity in this respect, as in many others, is itself an exception, if not, itself, an aberration.[26]

In combating the adverse effects of the current Islamic discourse on tradition, Taha couples the concept of *tadāwul* with that of *tadākhul* (interpenetration). The various branches and divisions in the Islamic tradition share a set of methodological modalities according to which the tradition's contents were formulated. This shared set, which takes praxis as its primary and defining feature, dictates a holistic approach to the tradition's various divisions, thereby preventing eclecticism and selective appropriation. The tradition, in other words, must be understood as a diversity within a unity. Accordingly, the interpenetration of a subtradition makes the entire tradition relevant, whether the subtradition is indigenous[27] (*maʾṣūl*) or assimilated (*manqūl*), or whether it is original to Islamic soil or transplanted from non-Islamic cultures. When the indigenous sciences (such as linguistics, Qurʾānic exegesis, Ḥadīth, Fiqh, Ṣūfism, and Kalām) interact with one another, their relationships are reciprocal and mutually influential, and so when two or more of them interact, as they often do, the interaction yields an indigenous science or a branch thereof. A notable example is the field of Uṣūl al-Fiqh, a theoretical juristic science that largely derives from linguistics, Fiqh, and Kalām.[28]

This, however, is not the case with the interaction between or among indigenous and imported sciences. When the latter makes inroads into the former, the resulting amalgamation is an indigenous science, whereas when the former makes inroads into the latter, the result remains a transplanted or foreign science. A case in point is Aristotelian logic. Since the eleventh century, the science of Uṣūl al-Fiqh has absorbed various elements from this logic, but the commanding epistemology and hermeneutical constitution of this science remained uniquely *sharʿī*, and thus native to the tradition. By contrast, the terminological adaptations that were introduced into Aristotelian logic with a view to making it accessible to the general population of Muslim scholars do not make it an Islamic science. The famous logical works of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī,[29] who appears to be the chief architect of this

adaptational approach, have clearly nothing about them that is indigenous to the Islamic tradition, save for the manner in which the subject and illustrative examples from the *sharʿī* field were presented. Another, perhaps more pertinent case is that of Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle's metaphysics.[30] More pertinent, because Taha, in making this distinction between indigenous and foreign sciences, is clearly attempting to subvert the Rushdian trend in modern Arab thought, a trend that begins with Faraḥ Anṭūn in the nineteenth century and continues down to Jābrī and Arkoun.[31]

Interpenetration takes three forms, the first of which is "internal," meaning that the interaction is between and among indigenous sciences. In this case, and as a rule, the determining force of the relationship resides in the practical science. If a theoretical indigenous science makes inroads into an indigenous practical science, it is the former that must reckon with the practical implications of the latter, since the determining paradigm of praxis is by definition hegemonic. However, should the foreign science make inroads into the indigenous science, it is not necessary for the latter to abide by the "theoretical conditions" of the former, unless there is good reason to do so. In other words, the leading and dominating imperative in any such interpenetration is always subject to that hegemony, until the contrary is proven.

A case in point is the interpenetration that has taken place through the study of Maqāṣid (aims of the law), whose intersection is Uṣūl al-Fiqh and ethics. The field of Maqāṣid developed after the tenth century with the aim of uncovering, through an inductive survey of the Sharīʿa, the universal principles that had defined the general interests of the law, principles that themselves become guiding precepts in legal reasoning.[32] But Taha argues that the Maqāṣid science consists of principles and theories whose ethical constitution has yet to be appreciated. For it is this science that diverted Uṣūl al-Fiqh from the course of theoretical abstraction, represented, for instance, in its insistence on, and penchant for, causal reasoning. The Maqāṣid, due to its practical-ethics demands, expanded the range of reasoning to include teleological causation, culminating in the subsumption of causal reasoning under the latter form of causation. The effect has been to connect technical causes (e.g., wine is forbidden because it intoxicates) to higher teleological considerations (wine is forbidden because it adversely affects mental judgment), thus rendering "preservation of reason" the highest and terminal

consideration, with the ultimate thrust of making practical ethics bear upon abstract reasoning (*UNIT*, 66).

It is not, I think, entirely clear how this example hits the mark. Nor is it clear that the Maqāṣid made any inroads (*tadākhul*) into Uṣūl al-Fiqh, since, historically speaking, Maqāṣid was an *already-present* derivative of that long-established field. One could say that the beginnings of Shāṭibī's theory of Maqāṣid can be found in Ghazālī's jurisprudence.[33] Yet, the general argument that there was a strong tendency in favor of cultivating action, praxis, and works appears sound. It would have been more accurate to say that severally or aggregately, with or without interpenetration, the indigenous sciences may have reached the heights of abstraction, requiring in the process certain corrections that appeared in the form of Maqāṣid, inter alia. Their ultimate goal, nevertheless, was and remained the formation of the ethical subject, a formation that deemed praxis to include discursive practice. The project of cultivating knowledge was not just a theoretical or epistemological activity, but one that was, as a process, imbued with ethical self-cultivation.[34] Scholarship, theorization, and interpretation were deemed to take place in a world governed by goodness, for the interpreting moral subject and his rational-intellectual apparatus (embedded in a particular psychoepistemology) presupposed the necessity of seeing the world as *requiring* such goodness, the summum bonum. The doctrine of *kalām al-nafs*, key to both scholarship and the pursuit of knowledge, presupposed the moral subject, which is to say that *before the subject can become an interpretive subject*, a hermeneutical agent, a prior moral drive is assumed to render interpretation an ethical praxis.[35] *The very attitude that produced scholarship was itself a moral technology*, a way of living, a practice, and not merely an intellectual-theoretical stance or interest. Even in its highest form of abstraction, knowledge was, *in and of itself*, a deeply psychological practice, a concrete way of *living in the world*. Accordingly, the invocation of the Maqāṣid may not be the most apt, but Taha's larger point remains nonetheless valid.

The second form of interpenetration is what Taha calls a "proximate external interpenetration," which occurs when an imported science, in part or in whole, "enters upon" one or more indigenous sciences with the purpose of establishing itself in accordance with the *tadāwul* principles prevailing in the indigenous science or sciences. An example of this type of interpenetration is the entry of Greek philosophy into Kalām, Aristotelian logic into Uṣūl al-Fiqh, and the theories of atom and motion into Kalām and

Falsafa. And finally, the third form is "remote external interpenetration," where an indigenous science enters upon an imported science or sciences (or parts thereof) in search of legitimization. A notable instance of this type is the entry of Kalām into metaphysics (*UNIT*, 66–67).

Having distinguished between indigenous and imported sciences, Taha is in a position to connect this distinction to the third principle, whose adoption aids in combating the ill effects of current Islamic discourse (which Taha, we will note, largely refrains from labeling).[36] The principle of alignment (*taqrīb*) pertains to the methodology that treats indigenous sciences insofar as the imported sciences bear upon them. The former cannot be analytically productive without being meaningfully connected to the tradition's imperatives of *tadāwul*, be these related to creed, language, or knowledge. This connection, or rather alignment, between these imperatives and the indigenous sciences is of the essence for isolating those qualities of the sciences that are organically harmonious and those that are not. Alignment thus rests on three props, all of which are intimately connected to *tadāwul* (*TM*, 245–46). The first prop is the pillar of credal works (*tashgīl ʿiqadī*),[37] whereby an imported science is aligned with an indigenous creed by means of stripping the former of values and tenets that contradict their counterparts in the latter (Taha may have in mind such fields as Greek logic and metaphysics). This does not mean we should obliterate these values and tenets altogether, since they are intrinsically useful as narratives representing knowledge of the other. What Taha is, in effect, arguing here is that the study of nonindigenous sciences is one thing, but an unexamined readiness to adopt everything and anything one studies is quite another. This perhaps provides another angle for looking at the issue of practical knowledge and praxis, since many sciences and disciplines may be of intellectual interest to the subject but they can hardly be taken seriously as enriching or revising the knowledge of practice.

There are various means by which alignment can be effected, including adjustment through reinterpretation. Yet, this interpretive adjustment must be consistent with the standing paradigms of the indigenous sciences, and cannot be subverted in favor of the foreign science. It is not surprising, then, that Taha registers his forceful disagreement with Averroes, who stated that "when the conclusions of demonstrative argument contradict the apparent meaning of the Sharīʿa, the apparent meaning must be reinterpreted according to the canons of Arabic heremeneutics."[38] Keeping in the back of his

mind Jābrī's and Arkoun's interpretations of Ibn Rushd, Taha can see only one possibility in the Andalusian philosopher's statement, namely, the final arbiter on *what* "Arabic hermeneutics" must yield in the way of an interpretive conclusion is demonstrative argument. An example of a less precarious credal alignment may be found in Ghazālī's *Asās al-Qiyās*, where Ghazālī made the major Aristotelian forms of argument comport with Uṣūl al-Fiqh's argumentative structures.

The second prop is linguistic economy, a feature characteristic of the Arabic language, which has long made this economy one of its desiderata. The introduction of this prop by Taha seems at first difficult to square within his project, and may appear as a stylistic matter and even a peripheral formality. Yet, it arguably makes for a substantive point, one intimately related to genuine naturalization of transplanted knowledge. Compact brevity must assume a speech community, one that shares and partakes in distributed and distributable meanings, information, and knowledge. Which is to say that for compact brevity to do this work, its subject matter must be forms of knowledge that are natively entrenched and socioepistemically diffused. Linguistic compactness is thus a guarantee against the verbosity and nonidiomaticity of translation, and of untranslatable alien concepts, by definition foreign and thus possibly irrelevant to, if not at odds with, tradition. If translation is an intrinsically problematic cultural conception, then the domestication of concepts and terms must be subjected to careful endogenous scrutiny, which seems Taha's main point.

To illustrate this, Taha cites the example of Ibn Ḥazm's *al-Taqrīb li-Ḥadd al-Manṭiq*,[39] where the author "aligned" Aristotelian logic with the science of *bayān*,[40] bringing the terminology of the latter to bear upon that of the former. Nonetheless, it is not clear how domestication of the sort Ibn Ḥazm undertook (like Ghazālī soon after) could effect the sort of alignment that Taha is proposing. By the standards of Ibn Taymiyya, who flourished some two centuries after Ghazālī, such a domestication did not amount to alignment, because the metaphysical thrust of the theory of universals, which underlies Aristotelian syllogistic logic, had escaped Ghazālī, among others.[41] For Ibn Taymiyya, domestication led to the insinuation of metalogical and metaphysical doctrines into Islam that contradicted what was for him the mainstream Sunni doctrines. Thus, for the requirement of the prop of brevity to have any substantive import, it would still have to encounter intellectual and credal intrusiveness potentially detrimental to the indigenous

sciences. The introduction of this prop as illustrated by Ibn Ḥazm's project of naturalization may therefore not be compelling, making Ibn Taymiyya's critique, among others, a welcome perspective, not only with respect to the issue of linguistic compactness, but also with respect to the entirety of Taha's discourse on indigenous and imported sciences. The requirement of brevity thus remains valid if one understands it as comporting with the imperatives that have made it an issue of "translation" in recent scholarly analysis.[42]

Finally, the third prop involves making imported knowledge accessible (*tahwīn maʿrifī*) by means of the revision or recontextualization of its subject matter in accordance with the dictates of the indigenous sciences. According to Taha, "the best example in the practice of accessibility is Ibn Taymiyya's *al-Radd ʿalā al-Manṭiqyīn*," where Ibn Taymiyya expanded and reformulated Aristotelian logical arguments according to the practical dictates of Sharīʿa principles (*UNIT*, 69). Again, the example here does not serve the otherwise valid point well. Ibn Taymiyya's contribution in this sphere was not to domesticate and naturalize Aristotelian logic, but rather to refute it as an unnecessary methodology, encumbered, furthermore, by inauspicious metaphysical doctrines. Ibn Taymiyya's overall argument was, after all, that syllogistic logic was entwined with Porphyry's theory of universals, making this logic ultimately imbued with masked metaphysical assumptions. Ghazālī's and Ibn Ḥazm's writings on Greek logic would have served Taha's case better.

It would be a mistake to construe Taha's position on indigenous and foreign sciences as a rejection or an attack on the latter. His methodological foregrounding, as this chapter has been trying to show, is meant to dislodge modern Arab discourse's penchant for treating the various discourses of the tradition as an indistinguishable mass, in the process confusing what is truly germane to the foundational and central paradigms with that which is peripheral to them. The "archetypal return" of Ibn Rushd captures the trends that Taha is opposing, trends that cannot see the forest for the trees.

Yet, when all is said and done, the distinction between indigenous and foreign does not seem to possess an intrinsic value in Taha's work. In other words, the issue is not one of identifying foreign knowledge for the purpose of segregation. Rather, the value ultimately resides in the practical significance of ethical knowledge. If the Rushdian philosophy is cultivated by the Arab modernists as a "traditional" justification of a route through which European Enlightenment reason can be legitimized and thus absorbed into

"Islamic modernity," then a central problem for Taha remains outstanding, namely, that type of reason not only is denuded of ethical forms but also lacks *the practical bent that renders praxis productive of knowledge*, praxis essential for the constitution of the Muslim subject. "It is with certainty that we know that the self can find no perfection without the complementarity of the tradition, and that no complementarity is ever possible without an indigenous methodology," one that "*brings into a unity theoretical knowledge and praxis*" (*UNIT*, 70, emphasis mine).

<div align="center">IV</div>

With a view to "constructing an independent theory for remoulding tradition" (*taqwīm al-turāth*), Taha begins his project in *Tajdīd al-Manhaj fī Taqwīm al-Turāth*[43]—among other writings—by insisting upon the application of principles he has established as integral to any such project. Following the example of tradition, a primary precondition for knowledge and its acquisition is argument and debate (*ḥiwār*), features integral to the communicative dialectical methods that formed, and were formed by, tradition.[44] Ranging over the entire spectrum of Islamic sciences, these logical methods assume as their foundation the principle of collective participation in the creation of knowledge, where knowledge is the product of direct as well as indirect intellectual exchange between the self and the other, whether the other is Muslim or not (*TM*, 20). As intimated earlier, dialectics are also founded upon ethical principles that take for granted both the indispensability and the responsibility of benefiting the other, this being a derivative of the larger principle that knowledge must take account of—but simultaneously transcend—the boundaries of the here and now, as well as of the I and We. Though they make legitimate demands of their own, these immediate interests (of the here and now, and I and We) remain both shortsighted and selfish on their own. Their completion and perfection reside in the embracing of distance, both spatial and temporal, human and nonhuman. The "other," near or distant, stands in equidistant importance to knowledge, just as future time, whether eternally remote or mundanely approaching, does. Temporal distance, including any conception of transcendence, is no less important than any present, just as distant and unknown, even

unknowable, nature is no less significant for our interests and existence than our immediate environment.

Since the application of upheld theoretical principles is as important as theorization itself (if not more crucial), the dialectical method, in fulfillment of Taha's requirement, is immediately put to practice. This is more than what the contemporary Muslim thinkers can boast, for, in their failure to adopt the dialectical method, they have not only neglected to engage with one another in a fruitful and constructive dialogue; they have also been unable to appreciate the structural interrelations and intellectual interpenetration between and among various branches of the tradition, itself formed by, and heavily dependent on, dialectic. While the first shortcoming may be forgivable, Taha thinks the second is not, for it is a fatal failure, one that has led to a fragmented view of tradition, which in turn has repeatedly landed these thinkers in positions characterized by incoherence and confusion.

Taha identifies rationality and ideology as the two culprits responsible for this state of affairs, since both are borrowings introduced by Muslim thinkers into their world and tradition without much forethought. In their quest for rationality, these thinkers have divided tradition into distinct and separate parts, thereby operating by the principle of "slice and chose" (*TM*, 25). Yet they have been unable to agree on which "slice" represents the rational paradigm. Some have held philosophy to be the abode of rationality, while others have opted for the *fiqhī* texts. Still others privilege the linguistic or theological genres, while adopting the approach of picking and choosing among two or more of these. In short, the crux of their projects has been to retain those parts of the tradition they have deemed compatible with this borrowed but denuded rationality[45] and to shun those parts that do not.

The second culprit, ideology, has largely been adopted in attempts to remold tradition through politicization (*tasyīs*). "What is meant by politicization here is bestowing on the political aspect the competence to fulfill the conditions of cultural and civilizational awakening, so that the value of the traditional text . . . would be confined to what this text signifies, in its social context, insofar as it serves the quest for political control and [the acquisition of] positions of power" (*TM*, 26). This quest is not necessarily a rogue one: it effectively takes many recognized forms, such as liberation,

progress, national unity, and even "revolutionism" (*tathawwur*, a neologism deriving from *thawra*, another modern term). Like the advocates of denuded rationality, the "politicizers" have shunned the parts of tradition that contradict their political projects and have categorized them as reactionary. Likewise, and despite their distinctly and narrowly political orientation, they have tended to sharply disagree among themselves, producing political forms that, whether revolutionary, reformist, or foundationalist, all fundamentally differ from one another. These varieties have also produced irreconcilable readings of the traditional text: the *salafīs*, for instance, have been "rigidified" in their exclusive focus on the early predecessors' texts, to the exclusion of others. In their selectivity, on the other hand, the nationalists have tended to appropriate those aspects of tradition that appear to exalt history, language, and race, even as the socialists have privileged texts that lend themselves to an interpretation that promotes liberation and revolution; the liberals, meanwhile, stockpile for their own use those texts that are construed as calling for freedom, democracy, and scientific thought (*TM*, 27), without regard for competing textual and other imperatives.

These modernist approaches have violated the very principles of critique they claim to rely on, for their advocates have put to the critical hatchet the substantive contents of the tradition but have failed to do the same for what is most foundational for their work, namely, the very critical methods they adopt. Had they subjected their borrowed methodological concepts to critique, they would have found that the traditional text is much more amenable to humanism (*ta'nīs*) than to politicization. By *ta'nīs* "we mean the arrogation to the ethical, moral, and spiritual side the important function of undertaking intellectual awakening, so that the value of the 'read' text is seen to lie in the practical and moral effects of that text on the 'reader'" (*TM*, 27). A politicized reading can never yield such a result.

It seems a requisite for a humanistic reading to strip the text from its context. "Once the spatial and temporal circumstances producing the text are removed, it (both) acquires a distinctive moral position and gains a particular form of spirituality that bestows on it an autonomous intellectual existence, making it relevant to meanings whose horizons extend to wherever man is found."[46] The humanistic dimension of the text is further expanded and deepened by putting its imperatives to practice, an ever-present requirement in any ethical project.

I shall not draw at this point any final conclusion from this requisite, which could, if taken at face value, create multiple problems for Taha where such problems need not arise. His argument should be taken to constitute a call for dehistoricization, where the anthropology of the text is omitted from consideration. Any such omission not only would result in misunderstanding the text as a practically oriented ethical discourse, but would also deprive it of its profoundly psychosocial import as a habituating means to the ethical technology of the self. A text without context is as dangerous as the discourse the current modernists, whom Taha is critiquing, have produced. In fact, it is precisely on this severance between text and context, between discourse and its effects on the formation of psychosocial subjectivity, that Taha is pouring the thrust of his critique. In other words, the severance in Taha's conception possesses a different quality and meaning: it amounts to viewing the traditional text as inherently capable of producing ethical subjectivities, first in its original historical context, and, even with severance, in any other. The traditional text is universalizable, *precisely because the circumstances producing it can be omitted from consideration.* However, the amenability of the text to universalization assumes adept knowledge of the methodological structures underlying its operations as a technology of the self, that is, *as a process of ethical habituation and cultivation.* To acknowledge the latter's existence, Taha seems to say, can in no way imply the historical particularity of the text, its spatiotemporal limitedness. It is because *we know* its power of ethical formation that we can claim it to be universal, transcending its own historical social origins.

It is within this context that Taha deploys his critique of the prevalent discourse among contemporary Arab thinkers. It is a critique that aims to transcend this discourse with a view to taking on the Enlightenment tradition with all the premises it entails. Put differently, Taha is moving within expanding circles of critical inquiry, the most immediate one being Arab discourse, while the largest is its dominant Western forerunner. And there is no more auspicious point of departure for this project than what is perhaps the most forcefully erudite discourse, that of Jābrī, whose work is regarded by many as the most towering intellectual achievement in the contemporary Arab world. Auspicious, because to demonstrate the incoherence of Jābrī's thought permits a point of entry to the next, wider circle, which, I think, is Taha's ultimate goal. Without this initial stage of internal critique,

the place of Arab-Islamic thought within modernity cannot be properly appreciated. Jābrī, it would seem, is the link between Taha's project and its world-stage target. To transcend Jābrī is a prerequisite: a critique of his work "will permit us to distinguish our method in approaching tradition from his, . . . and will enable us to construct our own particular theory for remolding tradition" (*TM*, 29).

<div align="center">V</div>

Three of Jābrī's key works fall under Taha's scrutiny: *Naḥnu wal-Turāth*,[47] *Takwīn al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, and *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, with the latter two belonging to a larger project that Jābrī called *Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*. As a whole, this corpus can be said to fall into two major contradictions: first, between a theoretical claim to a comprehensive approach, on the one hand, and a practical application of a fragmentary approach, on the other; and second, between a claim of examining methodology and an actual practice of deciphering substantive contents instead. In other words, Taha's critique focuses on the discrepancy between Jābrī's declared intention and the way he actually implements this intention. For Jābrī does announce that, insofar as there cannot be a true revaluation of tradition without a careful examination of the methodologies underlying its substantive structures, there cannot be a proper revaluation without a comprehensive approach to the tradition, constituted as a whole by its interconnected and interdependent parts.

In *Naḥnu wal-Turāth*, for instance, Jābrī attacks the Orientalists as much as he does Muslim scholars[48] for their approach to tradition, emphatically stating that their so-called method rests "on breaking the unity of Arabic philosophical thought into segregated parts, each of which is reinscribed in its Greek, Persian, or Indian origins" (*TM*, 30). He also laments the study of the Arabic tradition as "continuing to labor under the spell of this fragmenting, insolating, and unscientific outlook, for we [Arabs] continue to regard Fiqh, Kalām, philosophy, syntax, Adab, Ḥadīth, and Qur'ānic exegesis as sciences that each have their own perfectly autonomous existence" (*TM*, 30). It is well known, Jābrī further avers, that the typical Muslim scholar was encyclopedic in tendency, combining adeptness in several fields of study that ranged from theology, law, and philosophy to mathematics and linguistics. Accordingly, such an encyclopedic topical range "could not be studied and

evaluated properly unless (a commensurate) encyclopedic understanding of all its aspects and issues is obtained."[49] What should necessarily preoccupy the historian of Arabic thought is "not the pulse of life as a particular instance in one scientific field or another, but rather the first concern must be with the veins of life as a system (*manẓūma*) that subsists on the interconnectedness and complementarity between and among its parts and (various) divisions, [all of which] perform a holistic function. It is from within this function that the parts derive their meaning and their own functions."[50]

It is therefore clear that Jābrī regards his project as different from prior contributions in that, unlike the latter, his is, as he himself states, committed "to a holistic approach that links the various parts to the whole to which they belong."[51] Likewise, in his attempt to theorize the "Arabic mind," Jābrī makes the claim that his interest in studying the tradition "is not the ideas of the tradition as such, but rather the means (*al-adāt*) that produce these ideas," however much they are all mutually involved.[52]

It is fair to say, Taha argues, that Jābrī's declared intention is to anchor his project in a holistic approach to the tradition, a project that deems it equally important to unravel the frame of mind that constituted the methodology by which the tradition was formed. And so the question arises as to which of the two commitments in Jābrī's work led to the other. Taha asserts that we should not hesitate to reject the claim that the holistic approach dictated the imperative of engaging in a distinct methodology. Jābrī's work in general, as particularly exemplified in *Naḥnu wal-Turāth*, does not proffer any evidence in support of any such claim. On the other hand, the converse of this claim—namely, that concern with methodology has *precipitated* the counterinterest in holism—"requires detailed comment" (*TM*, 31).

Here Taha discusses the arguments deployed in *Naḥnu wal-Turāth*, pointing out that while Jābrī does formally acknowledge the interconnectedness of various fields of inquiry in the tradition, there is little in his work that demonstrates real concomitance (*mulāzama*, *talāzum*) between holism and methodology. His claims to holism and to an "encyclopedic approach" are belied by his actual discursive practice, for when he begins his substantive analysis he quickly partitions the tradition into a triad, namely, the demonstrative, hermeneutic, and gnostic (*burhān*, *bayān*, ʿ*irfān*).[53] These are presented as discrete and autonomous circles of inquiry, three "epistemic systems" that possess their own methodological structures, and the only

relations between them are cast in terms of either conflict or some sort of partial symbiosis, but never an organic integration. In fact, when examined closely, the relationships between and among them are cast as antagonistic and mutually exclusive. Furthermore, there never is any symmetry between or among them. In Jābrī's entire project, Taha rightly points out, the gnostic is systematically relegated to an inferior position (*TM*, 49), and is defined as unable to rise to the level of intellectual competence or rational power that even the hermeneutic "system" (*bayān*) enjoys. Indeed, in Jābrī's work even the hermeneutic (*bayānī*) lags behind the rational prowess of the demonstrative (*burhānī*), which, in Jābrī's work, unqualifiedly enjoys the highest status. Of all the great minds that the Arab-Islamic tradition has produced over a millennium, Ibn Rushd, a distinguished interpreter of the Aristotelian corpus, is singled out as the paragon of demonstrative science, of genuine rationality,[54] and the best that the Islamic tradition has ever produced.[55] Jābrī's claims to holism are therefore rendered empty by virtue of his actual analysis, which is nothing if not divisive and fragmenting.[56]

Taha does not leave his critique of Jābrī's divisions at the level of generalities but pursues them to a detail. Although Jābrī claims the division to be his own discovery, he also claims it to be consistent with that of the illustrious *ṣūfī* Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 1072), who, in his renowned *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*, speaks of "reason, knowledge, and gnosticism" as graded stages of intellectual experience. Qushayrī stated that "light in the beginning is the light of reason (*ʿaql*), in the middle it is the light of knowledge (*ʿilm*), and at the end [the highest stage] it is the light of gnosticism (*ʿirfān*); thus, the possessor of reason stands with *burhān*, the possessor of knowledge with *bayān*, while he who possesses gnosis (*maʿrifa*) is subject to *ʿayān*."[57] Through detailed analysis Taha shows that Jābrī distorted Qushayrī's categories and in the process created oppositions and contradictions where none had existed in this *ṣūfī's* understanding of knowledge. Just as significant, Jābrī turns Qushayrī's order of "attaining the light of knowledge" right on its head, because it is abundantly clear that the category of demonstration or *burhān* occupies the lowest epistemic order for Qushayrī (*TM*, 53).

The second contradiction Taha points out pertains to Jābrī's formal claim to study mechanisms and methodologies "that dictate the production of the traditional texts one from the other, and the manner of production between and among them." This would have required him to detail the inner structures of such methodological productions, subjecting them, at a second stage,

to a critique that remolds them within the spirit of their own constitution. The term used to describe this second stage is *mustakhrij*, a derivative of the central juristic concept of *takhrīj*, which was long employed by jurist-theoreticians and legists of Islam.[58] In other words, the enterprise requires not only the study of productive and reproductive hermeneutical techniques and methodologies, but the remolding of these in a creative move that can transpose them, as autonomous indigenous concepts, to a contemporary context. What Jābrī accomplished instead is a study not of the methodologies but of the substantive discourses through which these methodologies were expounded. "It is one thing for a scholar to study the methodologies themselves and another to study the discourse that these methodologies produce, . . . this latter discourse constituting nothing more than a preoccupation with substantive content," which Jābrī has mistaken for a genuine study of hermeneutical technique and methodological principles of derivation (*TM*, 33–34). In short, Taha seems to say, Jābrī has not only limited his project to the first, elementary stage; he has also confused one stage with the other. The structural interconnections between productive methodologies and holism therefore remain outside his project, leaving him confined to articulating the relationships between the substantive content of the texts, on the one hand, and a divisive and fragmenting view of the tradition, on the other.

It does not take much to explain Jābrī's intellectual predicament. His heavy, if not exclusive, reliance on borrowed concepts can only result in segregation, since nonindigenous concepts *by definition* lead to *faṣl*, namely, separation, fragmentation, and disruptive exogenous intrusiveness. "By definition," because exogenous concepts can never correspond to the tradition itself, either in part or in whole. Such concepts cannot, due to their origins, find an organic fit within the tradition, however much this latter is remolded and reinterpreted. Certainly, they can never fit with its hermeneutical and methodological infrastructures (*taḥtiyya*; *TM*, 34), because they are grounded in European modes of rationality and ideology that are structurally constituted in binary terms of deconstruction, rupture, crisis, and conflict, much of which acquires decidedly militaristic tones in Jābrī's discourse: "reconciliation," "alliance," "disengagement," "defense," "confrontation," "blasting," and "moment of explosion."[59]

Yet, contradictions are not the only problem in Jābrī's work. Driven by a narrow conception of rationality—which Taha will later dwell on as "denuded

rationality"[60]—and fueled by politicization, Jābrī ultimately rejects the fundamental principles governing the Arab-Islamic tradition and in the process assaults their advocates. Three of these principles are worth noting. First, Jābrī understands that this tradition conjoined Value and Fact, deeming them inseparable. Citing early texts of the tradition as well as the Qur'ān, he argues that "in Arabic thought and language, the meaning of reason is fundamentally connected with conduct and ethics."[61] Then he denounces this all-pervasive phenomenon on the grounds that it contradicts the objective outlook, this latter being not only bestowed with analytical and synthetic power but also constituting the standard that determines which aspects of the tradition are to be kept and which to be discarded.

We will have occasion to examine Taha's critique of the distinctions between Fact and Value as well as between Is and Ought, especially as the latter distinction was represented by Hume and G. E. Moore.[62] For now, it suffices to state that Taha invokes a cumulative countercritique from within Western moral philosophy that has argued against these distinctions on the following grounds: Rationality is, after all, saturated with value, since it is impossible to attain a neutral form of it, for there are at least two elements that necessarily and inescapably intrude on it. The first is the effect of society, culture, and history, which in their aggregate determine what is rationally acceptable and what is not; and the second is the very constitution of rationality as the product of certain theories and principles, which are in turn grounded in such values as clarity, simplicity, systematicity, empirical preferences, argumentative modes, observation, and the like, all of which, due to their value structures, have undergone modification and change within the relatively short duration of this rationality's life (as an Enlightenment product).

Nor can one claim Fact to be free of value, since Fact can only be expressed in and by language, itself ineluctably the bearer of conceptions deeply rooted in cultural values. This language further mediates selective appropriation, preference, desire, and relevance. When we describe Fact, we always engage in a teleological process, one that responds to our goals and desiderata. This description itself is by definition a bias that is wholly formed by value.

Conversely, Value is no less present in our reality than Fact, having as important a function in human life as Fact does. It is not merely a subjective entity confined to internal and emotive states, but can, like Fact, be described, discursively conveyed, analyzed, and collectively debated. Even

as Fact cannot be stripped of value, so Value cannot be readily stripped of fact. The lines of demarcation are therefore not so easily drawn. Yet, Jābrī has rushed into embracing the distinction as a predetermined and sealed matter, a distinction that is both questionable and dated.

The second principle Jābrī abjures is the interconnectedness between spiritual values (*qiyam rūḥiyya*) and knowledge, a pervasive and intrinsic characteristic of tradition. He deems these values to constitute an intrusion upon scientific knowledge, and, assigning them to what he called the "circle of gnosis," he pours out his wrath on them.[63] Aware of his categorical abnegation and condemnation of this "circle," he "defends himself by saying that 'what we tried to do is not to launch an ideological war; rather, [the project is] undertaken in the context of our critical analysis of epistemic regimes in Arab culture.'"[64] In fact, Jābrī's outlook is saturated with secularist tendencies that by definition cannot permit a serious consideration of nonsecular value. Secularism's political principle is the separation of political and religious powers, with the intention and effect of making the former the overlord of the latter. This explains why Jābrī banished the gnostic and downgraded the hermeneutical, only to elevate the demonstrative at their expense. The entire operation of privileging and depriviliging, along with the penchant to segregate and fragment tradition into ranked divisions, is, in effect, nothing but the function of Jābrī's bias in favor of secularism (*TM*, 37).

But according to Taha, even in this respect Jābrī is not sure of his commitments, of what he should advocate or reject. In his later writings, he seems inclined to distance himself from secularism, insinuating preference for other categories such as rationalism and democracy.[65] "But this retraction does not save him, because subjecting tradition to this principle [of secularism] has become [in his overall oeuvre] a fait accompli. It offers too little too late" (*TM*, 38).

The third principle Jābrī rejects is the interdependence and organic connectedness of dialectics and dialogue, on the one hand, and truth and correctness (*ṣawāb*), on the other. A fundamental characteristic of tradition is the collective participation of intellectuals, as a community, in the search for truth, where each scholar or thinker contributes to that end through argument, scholarly debate, and conversation. Jābrī has no appreciation for this collective and communal form of garnering knowledge. Whenever he pays attention to this dialectical phenomenon in Islamic history, as in his

discussion of the celebrated scholarly debate between Mattā b. Yūnus and Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī,[66] he uses it to illustrate the conflict (ṣirāʿ) between different epistemic regimes within the tradition—in this case between the hermeneutical (bayānī) and demonstrative (burhānī)—only to insist on the superiority of the latter over the former (TM, 38). Taha argues that Jābrī, snared by Western concepts of rationality, has developed no grasp of the type of rationality that undergirded the Islamic modes of communicative and communal dialectic (al-namūdhaj al-ḥiwārī al-Islāmī). For there is a major difference between the two. As it has come to be practiced, Western rationality is of the denuded type (to be discussed in chapter 4, section 2), whereas its Islamic counterpart—what he calls "dialectical rationality"—is the product of "living interrationality" (muʿāqala ḥayya).

The second part of this designation, which Taha does not explain, seems to be an anthropological concept: Debate and conversation occur within a living community of scholars and intellectuals, through concurrent and synchronic exchange. As such, dialectical rationality involves an actual community whose members interact with one another as living intellects, not just as representatives of a diachronic accumulation or revaluation of knowledge. The insistence on "living" gains further importance in light of Taha's definition of muʿāqala, a noun in Arabic whose form indicates reciprocity, exchange, mutuality. Yet, this reciprocity and exchange must occur within a community, where a member does not pronounce on matters in the world unless her audiences are taken into account as participants. This is why Taha insists that interrationality is not an individual act, as rationality often is. Rather, it obtains "by means of cooperation and participation with others, that is, by an [actual] interaction with the community" (TM, 38). It is tempting to think of this interrationality in terms of the Kantian distinction between the private and the public, where absolute freedom obtains in the latter, whereas obedience is a requirement of the former.[67] For Taha, so I read him, there is no contradiction between autonomous rational thought and communal interrationality, in the sense that the latter does not undermine the former just because it is channeled within a community of reason or communal dialogue.

This is also why interrationality is not merely an essence but rather an activity (faʿāliyya). Just as it is impossible for our faculty of hearing to be put to use without receiving the speech of others, interrationality cannot be

operative without considering the reason(s) of others. But it must be clear that interrationality is not an added layer of rationality, a higher stage within the same quality. To appreciate the analogy with hearing fully, interrationality must be understood as a quality entirely different from rationality. It is the way reason, when it attends to the community as integral to humanity, works. By virtue of its communal setting, it acquires dimensions crucial to its *qualitative* difference from what Taha will call "denuded reason" (see chapter 4, section 2). Interrationality distinguishes itself from mere rationality by its insistence on taking action and praxis as its foundations, where theoretical knowledge *necessarily* precipitates, defines, and dictates—but simultaneously stands in a dialectic with—a particular mode of action, performance, works, and behavior *within* the community. In other words, there is no interrationality without an integral engagement of theoretical knowledge in action, making the latter not merely an application of the former, but rather its embodiment and means of perfection, hence the dialectic. Action thus gives value to theoretical knowledge and, as Taha will argue, carries that knowledge to further intellectual and spiritual heights. Yet, while the relationship is dialectical, praxis is privileged over theoretical knowledge (a philosophical position well understood and appreciated by premodern lights).[68]

This is another way for Taha to say that what governs interrationality is not truth and falsehood, the exclusive concerns of denuded rationality, but rather agreement and disagreement. Communal agreement—what a particular community agrees to be the foundations, parameters, and constitution of its practices—is the final measure and ultimate determinant of its modes of living in the world. Since in this community "every individual participates with others in rationalizing matters of concern, collective agreement motivates him to engage in praxis and works, while disagreement deters him [from other, ethically reprehensible practices]. Accordingly, interrationality consists of all rationalizations that take place through communication within a collectivity [or community], rationalizations whose bases are ethics and rules of logic, and whose desideratum is the accomplishment of communal works" (*TM*, 38).

Imported rationality of the type Jābrī has unquestioningly advocated is denuded in the sense that it is bereft, first, of the component of communal and collective participation and, second, of the element of praxis and works

that are bound by a theoretically formulated and practically enhanced ethics. In this last context, it bears repeating that practice and works refine, improve, *and deepen* theoretical knowledge.

In short, Jābrī has not only fallen into contradictions and failed to practice what he has preached, he has also failed to understand the stuff of the very tradition he wished to study. Nor is this all. His superficial understanding[69] of the imported methods on which he relies is compounded by an inability to assess and critique these methods in terms of their relevance to the study of tradition. Lack of command of the theory he employs leads him to adopt irreconcilable methodological approaches, which in turn drive him to inconsistent and contradictory conclusions. A case in point is his stance on what he calls rational and religious intelligibles. Taha is not sure how the two relate to each other, for Jābrī equates, on the one hand, rational unintelligibles (*al-lā-maʿqūl al-ʿaqlī*) and that which is contrary to religious intelligibles, an equation that effectively amounts to an acknowledgment that rational and religious intelligibles are noncontradictory and in fact belong to the same conception of rationality.[70] On the other hand, he categorizes the two intelligibles separately, as indicated in his designation of each with a different label. Jābrī insists that any religious philosophy that delves into theological and metaphysical questions beyond the basic tenets of belief in God and prophethood is nothing but an irrational philosophy. Thus, it would appear as if rational and religious intelligibles at times stand in contradiction with one another while at others they are reconcilable, if not consistent with one another. But Jābrī cannot have it both ways. Whether he upholds the consistency of the two intelligibles or their irreconcilability, he is bound, on his own givens, to fall into contradiction (*TM*, 45).

Furthermore, the category of rational intelligibles according to Jābrī tolerates three possible meanings, each of which is assigned a different order of rationality. On his view, there are three types of reason, each corresponding to the divisions he discerns in the intellectual map of Islamic thought, namely, evincive reason (*ḥaṣīf*) grounded in demonstration (*burhān*), weak reason (*ḍaʿīf*) grounded in hermeneutics (*bayān*), and absurd or nonsensical reason (*sakhīf*) grounded in gnosis (*ʿirfān*). Thus rational intelligibles would, in this configuration, be amenable to three dualities, since demonstrative intelligibles have their antonymic counterpart in demonstrative unintelligibles, just as hermeneutic and gnostic intelligibles have their corresponding unintelligibles. "Scientific" or "rational unintelligibles" harness reason

and its arsenal of argumentative and discursive strategies "in order to demonstrate that reason, in the final analysis, is powerless (*ᶜājiz*)" or "insufficient." It is "a discourse that constructs itself rationally, through [logical] premises and conclusions," in order to "show that when all is said and done reason is impuissant."[71] Rational unintelligibles therefore can correspond only to hermeneutical, *burhānī* unintelligibles, not demonstrative unintelligibles, since hermeneutical unintelligibles are clearly more akin, in their unintelligibility, to rational unintelligibles (*TM*, 47). Yet, Jābrī opts for equating rational unintelligibles with demonstrative unintelligibles, an equation that leads to serious problems because he argues for a dialectical relationship between religious intelligibles and rational unintelligibles, thereby positing a certain influence that the former exercises on the latter (*TM*, 46).

All this shows, Taha effectively argues, that there is a generous amount of confusion in Jābrī's thought, stemming as it does from a deficient conception of definition (*ḥadd*), a basic requirement in the construction of any sound argument. A fundamental requirement of definition is concomitance (*iṭṭirād*) between definiens and definiendum, for if strict concomitance is not observed, the definiens may not be exclusive (*māniᶜ*), and may thus give room to the inclusion of attributes beyond those belonging to the definiendum. The failure of concomitance is fatal for the formulation of logical premises, and these, if flawed, lead to a problematic argument-structure and erroneous conclusions—precisely the shortcomings of Jābrī's work.

Jābrī's typology is not limited to the misclassification of hermeneutical rational unintelligibility, however. Confusion is also overwhelmingly present in the gnostic category, because he is never sure whether the religious, which he carves out as an analytical category, is not transcendent to nonreligious categories. Consistent with his statement about unintelligibles, he patently asserts that "there has never been in ancient or recent history an intelligible that is entirely free of the unintelligible."[72] Apart from the fact that this claim fundamentally undermines Jābrī's classification of traditional knowledge into three *distinct* epistemic fields, it also falls into the dilemma of drawing a distinction between demonstrative and gnostic knowledge, a distinction in which the proclaimed superiority of the former over the latter becomes arbitrary. If demonstrative knowledge is also subjective and liable to unintelligibility, then the question arises: Why not place the hermeneutical (*bayānī*) and gnostic (*ᶜirfānī*) in positions from which they can likewise judge and pronounce on the value of demonstrative knowledge

(*burhānī*)? Why should this epistemic privilege be exclusively allocated to the demonstrative? As importantly, if all rational and demonstrative intelligibles are inflicted with unintelligibility, then what is the boundary between the religious and the nonreligious, a boundary on which Jābrī's entire thought rests? "In sum," Jābrī's method of opposition and contrast (*muqābala*)

> violates the logical principles which [his] method claims to adopt. . . . He made rational unintelligibles to be corresponding equivalents to that which is contrary to religious intelligibles (*naqīḍ al-maʿqūl al-dīnī*), which [logically] led to the correspondence between rational and religious intelligibles. He also made rational unintelligibles to be corresponding equivalents to demonstrative unintelligibles, while overlooking the legitimate correspondence between rational unintelligibles and hermeneutical unintelligibles. By virtue of his claim of the inseparability of intelligibles and unintelligibles, he then made rational unintelligibles to be corresponding equivalents to gnostic intelligibles, thereby opening the door for the admixture of religious intelligibility and its gnostic counterpart. This led, on his doctrine, to the equivalence of religious intelligibles to rational unintelligibles, which is contrary to what he had [earlier] declared to be his given premise. (*TM*, 48)

VI

If even the best of contemporary Arab-Islamic thought, as exhibited in Jābrī's erudite work, suffers from fundamental problems, then it is small wonder that Taha calls for overhauling this thought with a sense of unmitigated urgency. In this thought, contradictions are plentiful, but so are other major shortcomings, including a fragmenting approach to tradition, lack of command in deducing the methodological principles that drive it, and the attendant inability to critique these principles with a view to remolding them for contemporary needs. These shortcomings are all symptoms of a foundational problem, namely, Arab-Islamic thought continues to rely on borrowed, undigested, and alien Western concepts hardly suitable for a genuine and meaningful refashioning of the Islamic tradition.

Accordingly, Taha sees that no real advance in the project of awakening (*yaqaẓa*)[73] can be achieved without first addressing these issues, especially that of mapping out the tradition. Only when the interconnectedness of the

tradition's overall structure has been understood will these other problems dissipate, since a correct understanding of tradition is the basis on which the project can logically and autonomously proceed. Interconnectedness and interpenetration are the most salient features of the Islamic tradition, as evidenced in the numerous classical works concerned with classifying the traditional sciences and outlining the connections and interdependencies between and among them. From Fārābī's *Iḥṣā' al-ʿUlūm* and Ikhwān al-Ṣafā's *Rasā'il* to Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* and Ibn Ḥazm's *Marātib al-ʿUlūm*, from Ṭāshkuprīzādeh's *Miftāḥ al-Saʿāda* to Ḥajjī Khalīfa's *Kashf al-Ẓunūn*, these and numerous works, despite their different orientations, evince a strong tendency to treat the sciences that constitute the tradition as mutually complementary and interdependent (*TM*, 89–90). In *Marātib al-ʿUlūm*, for example, Ibn Ḥazm declared that " 'Sciences are all related to each other, and one in need of the other.' "[74] Likewise, in *Mīzān al-ʿAmal*, Ghazālī offered the learner the following advice: " 'The student must not plunge into the sciences all at once, but must take care to observe the order [of the sciences], starting from the important to the more important. He must not embark on a science until he has attained mastery of the science that precedes it, because sciences are structured systematically (*tartīban ḍarūriyyan*), some being means to others. The successful student is the one who attends to this structured ordering.' "[75]

Yet, "structured ordering" is only one aspect of interdependency and mutual complementarity. There is also the factor of interaction (*tafāʿul*) whereby sciences interlace, intertwine, interweave, interpenetrate, and intermesh to evince a dialectic of mutual and cross-fertilization. Anyone who has delved into theology (Kalām) knows this science's interconnections with language, linguistics, and philosophy. The same is true of the interrelations between logic, on the one hand, and linguistics and legal theory (Uṣūl al-Fiqh), on the other, between philosophy and theology, philosophy and mysticism, and the all-pervasive presence of dialectic (Jadal) across these sciences (*TM*, 90). Furthermore, interaction and fertilization once operated in nearly every direction of the Islamic sciences. It can be said that both the instrumental and the substantive sciences[76] inflected and influenced each other, often in fundamental ways. Just as logic came to reshape various legal and theological sciences, these latter came to reshape instrumental sciences. Similarly, grammar and linguistics had a decisive influence on legal and theological discourse, but they were also reworked by these sciences. We can

observe this in *Naḥw al-Qulūb*, in which Qushayrī reformulated the rules of language according to *ṣūfī* precepts.[77]

The interpenetrating nature of the traditional sciences was such that those of intellectual ability were bound, by virtue of the structure of tradition, to attain a certain level of encyclopedic knowledge. It was expected that the student attaining specialized and expert knowledge in one science would pursue another interrelated field of inquiry. Ghazālī, for instance, urged students "not to leave any science or branches thereof without delving into its ambitions, aims, and methods." Circumstances permitting, the student should "come to command them in their entirety, *for sciences are collaborative and connected one to the other*."[78] Taha is no longer satisfied with the term *mutaʿallim* (seeker of knowledge), a derivative of *ʿilm*, a concept he regards as technical in nature. The seeker of encyclopedic knowledge must be recognized, in the tradition of such polymaths as Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī and Jāḥiẓ, as *mutaʾaddib* (a derivative of *adab*), one who is endowed, in our philosopher's conceptual repertoire, with profoundly ethical qualities. As Ibn Qutayba, another polymath, once observed, "he who wishes to become a *ʿālim*, let him seek a single science; but he who wishes to become an *adīb* is required to develop a command of [all the] sciences."[79] The *adīb*, the expert in and practitioner of encyclopedic knowledge, is therefore one for whom philosophy, law, theology, Ṣūfism, grammar, linguistics, poetry, and literature, among others, come together as one whole.

In the classical Islamic tradition, encyclopedism was not a luxury or just an inclination. It was, for the truly able, a necessity. Take, for instance, the well-known science of *tafsīr* (Qurʾānic exegesis). It was widely recognized that expert knowledge of this field required intimate knowledge of no less than fifteen fields of inquiry, including linguistics, grammar, derivation (Ishtiqāq), rhetoric (Balāgha, which encompassed the subdisciplines of Maʿānī, Bayān, and Badīʿ), theology, Uṣūl al-Fiqh, the science of the occasions of revelation (Asbāb al-Nuzūl), the science of variations in the text of the Qurʾān (Qirāʾāt), abrogation, "law," and Ḥadīth. For the philosophical polymaths, a similar constellation of expertise was required. In order for Kindī, the earliest of distinguished Muslim philosophers, to attain his philosophical achievements, he found it necessary to master and write on various disciplines, including logic, mathematics, medicine, geometry, astronomy, music theory, geography, dialectic, psychology, politics, and ethics. On the whole, Islamic intellectual history is peppered with the names of illustrious luminaries whose

encyclopedism and subtle yet prolific intellectual production have long been recognized: Kindī, Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Rushd, Ghazālī, al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, Ibn Khaldūn, and Suyūṭī. To this list, Taha could have easily added a long list of others of matching intellectual rigor and depth.

Thus, there can be no genuine or correct way to evaluate tradition without the full recognition that interpenetration and interdependency are among its most salient features. I have earlier noted that Taha recognizes two forms of this interpenetration, the internal and external. Internal interpenetration occurs between and among indigenous Islamic sciences, whereas its external counterpart occurs when indigenous sciences interact with "transmitted" or "imported" sciences, "be they Greek, Persian, or Indian." The "most perfect archetype of internal interpenetration" is found in the legal theory of Abū Isḥāq al-Shāṭibī, whereas its external exemplary counterpart is found in the metaphysics of Ibn Rushd (*TM*, 92). A sound analysis of the "internal methodological mechanisms" (*al-āliyyāt al-dākhiliyya*) these two thinkers developed within their respective fields permits Taha to make the following hypothesis—"A proper evaluation of a Muslim intellectual's or a sage's production cannot obtain without taking it to be true that the interpenetration of his production with mainstream Islamic sciences is much stronger (*aqwā*) than its interpenetration with sciences whose affinity (*qurb*) with this mainstream is weaker." This hypothesis should stand until "the contrary is proven" (*TM*, 92).

VII

In a dialectical tone reminiscent of the disputational methods characteristic of classical Islamic Jadal and Munāẓara,[80] Taha engages in a lengthy, tightly crafted, logical arguments intended to demonstrate the rootedness of the field of legal theory, especially as formulated by Shāṭibī, in the mainstream intellectual tradition. His engagement almost explicitly counters Jābrī's claim that this science neither belongs to Jābrī's demonstrative category nor is dominated by imported sciences (*ʿulūm manqūla*). What is more, legal theory draws on the mainstream dialectical discourse (*mutadāwal*) of ethics, which came to be meshed with this theory in ways that also influenced the substantive "law" (*fiqh*) that it undergirds. Standing in a "totalizing relation" (*nisba shāmila*) to legal theory and affecting substantive law,

ethics would be the closest thing to what Taha called mainstream dialectical tradition. Against Jābrī, who argued that the science of Maqāṣid as elaborated by Shāṭibī is to be distinguished form Uṣūl al-Fiqh, Taha argues that the Maqāṣid theory does not just "belong" to Uṣūl al-Fiqh; it does so in such intricate, powerful, and organic ways that even the classical legal theorists did not fully realize—a central point Taha aims to bring to sharp relief (*TM*, 97). In fact, Taha goes on to claim, the theory of Maqāṣid is "the axis of internal interpenetration" (*TM*, 97–98), a formulation which I take to mean that the confluence of ethics and legal precepts captures what might be called the genetic intellectual structure of the Islamic tradition.[81]

It is clear that Taha wants to go beyond the classical tradition, claiming that there is more to Maqāṣid than this tradition could appreciate. Of course, the by-product of this argument is that a fragmenting and isolationist approach as that which Jābrī adopted would be rendered irrelevant at best and invalid at worst. But even the traditional understanding seems to have missed the full import of the conceptual complex that Maqāṣid represented, a lack that has continued to cloud thinkers' understanding of it.

There are three distinct meanings concealed within the homonymous concept of *maqṣad* (singular of *maqāṣid*). First is the search for that which serves an interest, or a quest or pursuit of benefit, which in the "law" is defined in such a way as to yield communal and individual good. This substantive goal, a quest for a content signifier (*maḍmūn dalālī*), Taha calls *maqṣūd* (= intended benefit = *taḥṣīl fā'ida*). Second is the *mental state* of intention (*niyya*), understood as a conscious, deliberate quest to accomplish a good. It is the emotive and psychological condition that underlies the will to intend (a state Taha terms *quṣūd*). Third is the "rise of a legitimate motive," a "rationale" (*ḥikma*), that aims (*taqṣud*) to attain an ethical value. This meaning, called *maqṣad*, speaks to the "value content of *sharʿī* discourse" (*TM*, 98–99). Students of legal theory have missed the fact that all three levels—*maqṣūdāt*, *quṣūdāt*, and *maqāṣid*—are interlaced with ethical value derived from a moral fabric, and thus exhibit the main structures of confluence and interpenetration between legal theory and ethics.

The first category of *maqṣūd* represents a substantive content derived either from a linguistic form or from a signifier issuing therefrom. In other words, it does not entirely depend on the dictates of language as a prescription, interpreted in accordance with its apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*). Yet, while this signifier consists of a rational operation in which language and

linguistic hermeneutics play no direct role, it is by no means an abstract form of reasoning, unbound by higher principles that govern this reasoning. Indeed, it is closely tied to, and wholly geared toward, a "practical value," namely, the discursive divine command that calls for action and works to be performed according to well-defined modes of conduct. The force of ethical orientation here is clear, for even if a particular divine command may diverge from the general concepts of the normative system, it is to be reinterpreted in accordance with the governing principles of this system. What counts, indeed governs, here are the universal principles that derive from the system in its entirety, not the specific linguistic structures and immediate meanings.[82] This is where the value of the Meccan revelation lies, since it represents a concentric distillation of ethical values as the basis for action and belief, values that in the Medinan period become diluted by the practical concerns of organizing a new society and polity.[83] The *maqṣūd* therefore captures the attempt to guide the human to his most natural self, along the way that "leads him to the true knowledge of his submission to the Creator" (*TM*, 100).[84]

Up to this point, the claims of Uṣūl al-Fiqh to ethical constitution are structural, in the sense that the location of *maqṣūd* is squarely lodged, as a matter of substantive content, within a system of juridical ethics. Yet, there is a profound psychological dimension to this ethical quest in terms of which the second category—and no less the third—justifies its existence. *Quṣūd* represents the domain in which intention is defined as the will to mean to do or not to do something, without this entailing the requirement that the actual occurrence took effect.[85] Will exercised for the attainment of pure intention is a profoundly psychological operation on the soul, and one that, through this very operation, disciplines that soul. The profundity and crucial importance of garnering intention are such that acts are ultimately judged by them. If good, sincere, and genuine intention is attained by the conscience with regard to performing a certain act, the act is deemed valid and thus ethically and legally sound. The failure to "call to presence sincere intention" (*istiḥḍār al-niyya*), or worse, to bring forth a bad intention, will invalidate the act and render it ethically unacceptable. Thus, even a perfect technical performance of the act does not save the holder of insincere intention. Intention must be unfeigned and genuine; and it must seek the attainment, as the third category insists, of the highest ethical value, the ultimate desideratum. The three *maqāṣid* categories then represent complements to

another, one building on top of the other, with each marshaling its strength to bolster the subject's intention and practice in the art of living. "The science of Maqāṣid is then the form that the science of ethics took in order to merge itself with the science of Uṣūl al-Fiqh" (*TM*, 103). But this merger is so massive and multilayered that it is apt to call Uṣūl al-Fiqh "the Science of the Principles of Ethics" (*TM*, 105).

In his critique of Jābrī's fragmenting outlook as well as his demonstration of the interpenetration between and among Islamic sciences, especially between the ethical and the "legal," Taha presents compelling historical and logical arguments. So far so good. But toward the end of his long discussion (*TM*, 89–123), he regresses toward an evaluation of Shāṭibī that makes an exception of the legal theorist's contribution. Shāṭibī now appears as a "renewer" (*mujaddid*; *TM*, 122), and the "father of the interlacing of ethics with legal theory." He is cast as having charted a path in constructing Islamic science on the basis of mutually complementary coordination and systematization, a path "the likes of which we have not known either before or after him."[86]

Yet, if we accept this argument to be true, then all claims to the interpenetration between Uṣūl al-Fiqh and ethics fall apart, since "Uṣūl al-Fiqh" does indeed bear the burden of a history in which it was influential on, not to say formative of, other fields of inquiry[87] in the long period between the ninth century and the end of the eighteenth. Put tautologically, if Uṣūl al-Fiqh is the natural abode of Maqāṣid—as Taha just argued—then Shāṭibī cannot be seen as the innovator that Taha makes out him to be, however much his theory exhibited particular characteristics. Nor would we be able to account for Ghazālī's contributions that appear to have anticipated important aspects of Shāṭibī's theory.[88] If Shāṭibī is made to be the exceptional luminary, then what he stands for in terms of Taha's claims to interpenetration in turn becomes an exception to a dominant rule. This is precisely what Jābrī had already done with Shāṭibī, not only by making him, together with al-ʿIzz Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, an exception for having "founded the science of *bayān*" upon demonstrative science (*burhān*), but also by having Shāṭibī signify a categorical rupture with his "literalist" *uṣūlī* predecessors.[89]

According to Taha, not only Shāṭibī is considered an exception *within* the legal sciences, Uṣūl al-Fiqh itself is likewise declared an exception to the other Islamic sciences. Because Kalām is deemed "abstractly theoretical" (*naẓarī mujarrad*), for instance, Taha determines that it does not represent

the "best" of interpenetration, certainly unlike the *sharʿī* disciplines that are, *in addition*, eminently practical (*TM*, 110). It is thus difficult to escape the conclusion that Taha—here at least—unnecessarily falls prey to the same charge of fragmentation that he has directed against Jābrī. That Shāṭibī "opened the path to building Islamic science" (*TM*, 122) in ways that perfected the modalities of interpenetration might indeed prove useful to the projects of many modern thinkers, with Taha at the top of their list. But signaling the exceptionality of Shāṭibī does very little to bolster the initial claims Taha has made about the interpenetration that characterizes, if it does not define, the tradition. In fact, his claims to Shāṭibī's exceptionalism tend to militate against his otherwise valid claims, which could have found ample support in the view, which I have articulated elsewhere, that Shāṭibī's theory continues on the same epistemological path that Ghazālī had charted in *Shifāʾ al-Ghalīl* some two and a half centuries earlier.[90]

If a careful, philological, and diachronic analysis of Uṣūl al-Fiqh's tradition leads Taha to conclude that Shāṭibī's contribution was no more than a remarkable refinement and creative elaboration on earlier fundamental developments within this central field, then Taha's claims to exceptionality cannot be taken as either serious or decisive, leaving intact his otherwise valid claims about interpenetration. That he finally, after his brief remarks about Shāṭibī's exceptionality, reverts to his unqualified assertion that Uṣūl al-Fiqh is the most representative science of the mainstream tradition[91] amounts to a forceful attestation of the validity of what is most central to his thesis.

If for Taha Shāṭibī's legal theory is the best example of internal interpenetration, then Ibn Rushd's metaphysics is the most eloquent expression of external interpenetration. Metaphysics is an "ideal type" (*namūdhaj mithālī*) of this latter interpenetration because it stands at the furthest point in meeting the praxis-based requirements of the mainstream dialectical system of the tradition (*majāl al-tadāwul*). On the other hand, Ibn Rushd is the most suitable example of this trend because he represents a case study that meets all the necessary conditions of radical opposition to internal interpenetration (*TM*, 125).

Whereas internal interpenetration between or among indigenous disciplines does not attend to the direction (*ittijāh*) that this interaction and interlacing take (because it invariably contributes to the mainstream indigenous tradition), external interpenetration imposes certain limitations and

thus requires particular attention to, and awareness of, the teleology conceived in the interaction between an imported science and an indigenous one. Accordingly, external interpenetration is of two kinds. The first aims to amalgamate an imported science into a relevant indigenous counterpart, with a teleological desideratum whose concern remains the elaboration, enrichment, and strengthening of the indigenous science. This kind, conducive to the field of *tadāwul* and its requirements of practice, Taha calls "proximate external interpenetration" (*tadākhul khārijī qarīb*). However, if interpenetration proceeds in the direction of subordinating the Islamic science to the imperatives and enhancement of the imported science, then it is another kind of an interlacing science, one that involves what he terms "remote external interpenetration" (*tadākhul khārijī baʿīd*). The dualism within this type of interpenetration leads him to identify the following rule: "Whenever an indigenous science is amalgamated into an imported science, [the result] will tend to diverge from the mainstream's dialectical tradition; whenever an imported science is amalgamated into an indigenous science, the [result] will tend to inch toward that tradition" (*TM*, 126). In other words, interpenetration is decided by the governing principles of the science that finally succeeds in arbitrating the amalgamating relationship.

In all of the vast textual space and critical attention he devotes to Ibn Rushd,[92] Taha wants to show that this Aristotelian philosopher's sway over the minds of so many contemporary Muslim writers[93]—especially over Jābrī's—has been detrimental to a cohesive view of tradition. Nowhere in Taha do we find a statement that directly captures the reasons that have led these writers to privilege Ibn Rushd, a statement that would have saved him much of the energy he expends in showing *how* Ibn Rushd promotes (or is construed as promoting) a narrow view of rationalism and, perhaps as a consequence, a fragmented outlook on Islam. Instead, in page after page of Taha's critique we get an Ibn Rushd who did everything in his capacity to divide the Muslim sciences, whether indigenous or imported, stripping them of the cross-fertilization that was accomplished before his time. Instead of continuing Ghazālī's project in assimilating logic into Uṣūl al-Fiqh, Ibn Rushd insidiously separated the two sciences when he abridged Ghazālī's canonical *Mustaṣfā*,[94] leaving the distinctive Islamic science of Uṣūl bereft of the benefits that logic had offered it (*TM*, 127–28). And one is never sure, Taha rightly argues, what exactly he wanted to say in *Faṣl al-Maqāl Bayna al-Ḥikma wal-Sharīʿa min al-Ittiṣāl*, to such an extent that the last word in the title may

well have been not *Ittiṣāl* (connection) but rather *Infiṣāl* (separation).[95] In this work, he wavers between finding correspondence and opposition, leaving a vast number of commentators on his work in disagreement as to which of the two paths he took, or meant to take. In either case, his position is highly problematic, Taha avers. "If his position is one of opposition, then negating interpenetration is evident; if his position [argues for] correspondence, then no two [drastically different] things that exist separately can be subject to interpenetration" (*TM*, 131).

That Ibn Rushd largely preached and practiced fragmentation, dividing between and among the sciences, and mostly privileging Aristotelian philosophy, needs little demonstration. But to show *how* Ibn Rushd went about breaking tradition into distinct and separate fields is arguably no more important than showing *why* Jābrī and so many Arab and Muslim thinkers found Ibn Rushd the Fragmenter so appealing. What these thinkers hold differs little from the positions of a host of other Muslim scholars in the Western academy, who maintain similar notions in answer to the larger question "What is Islam?" To say that these scholars, like Jābrī and many like him, are struggling (consciously or unconsciously) to accommodate Islam within liberalism[96] is to state the most obvious. In their narratives, the Muslim tradition is as many things as liberalism is; it is, in fact, anything that liberalism *wants it to be*! It is amenable to capitalism as much as it is to the puritanistic impulses of evangelism. It is also chronically contradictory, taking many irreconcilable forms and shapes, and, for good measure, it is also manifestly ambiguous.[97] It is pantheistic in part and legal in another, philosophical here and scientific there, theological and literary, hateful and loving. So we can make of it today as we wish: a liberal reincarnation! And in line with this hegemonic liberal culture, which had secularized Christianity by expropriating its forms through secular humanism, Islam must be the religion of love (Ṣūfism) and rationality (Ibn Rushd), depending on the aspect of liberalism to which a liberal Muslim finds herself inclined. For modern Arab thinkers, the embryonically Rushdian rationality of the West frames and centers mimesis.

In his work so far, Jābrī has reached conclusions like those of many other scholars operating under the pull of the liberal tradition, notwithstanding his superior philological, but still distinctly Orientalist, knowledge.[98] Taha therefore may have wasted much ink in debunking Ibn Rushd only in order to push back against the overwhelming modern Arab tendency to canonize

the Aristotelian philosopher. He also gives Jābrī's act of privileging Ibn Rushd an undue attention, for his understanding that Jābrī often resorts to concepts and ideas whose time of glory has passed even in the West—their ultimate progenitor (*TM*, 36–37)—should count as a decisive critique. But the larger and most valuable point in Taha's project remains his persuasive discourse in favor of a dialectically woven tradition, manifestly characterized and structured by interpenetration. Persuasive, not because his diagnosis is always historiographically and philologically sound, but because the tradition itself was acutely and self-consciously aware of what it at times regarded as even excessive interpenetration.[99]

By successfully flattening the Jābiriyyan edifice, which rests on the paradigmatic triadic categories of *burhān*, *bayān*, *ʿirfān*, Taha accomplishes his primary task of attending to the smallest concentric circle. This achieved, he directs his attention to the next circle, namely, the Enlightenment concepts of reason and ethics, concepts that have dominated, if not colonized, the minds of Arab and Muslim thinkers.

The Spirit of Modernity

I

> Who can deny that Muslim society faces grave spiritual challenges inasmuch as it faces material ones? Standing at the forefront of spiritual challenges is an intellectual wandering represented in a great conceptual strife from which it cannot find a way out. It continues to be flooded by ideas fashioned by other societies, [with the consequence that] it has treated these complex and recondite ideas—not to mention their labyrinths and wiles—erratically, unable to digest or reject them. The reality is that as long as Muslim society has not found a way to invent its own ideas or to reinvent the ideas of others as if they were *ab initio* its own, there is no hope for it to escape this intellectual confusion that has been inflicted on the minds. (*RH*, 11)[1]

The intellectual confusion in the Muslim world, coupled with an uncritical imitation of Western modernity, led many to think that this modernity is inevitable, unavoidable, transhistorical, permanent, beneficial, and devoid of harm. But Western modernity, Taha also insists, is also profoundly materialistic, in opposition to the Islamic modernity he is calling for. Which brings us to the central question of how our philosopher defines modernity in the first place.

On his view, modernity has many facets and possesses, as he says, "multiple possibilities" (*imkānāt mutaʿaddida*; *RH*, 16), since one can speak of

multiple Western modernities. There are French, German, English, and American modernities, among others. There are political, economic, and social modernities. Differentials in modern accomplishments are evidenced even in one and the same region, for one can observe that some of these modernities have a larger share of achievement in industrialization than, say, law, while others have been markedly more successful achievers in economics than, say, in politics. This being the case in the West, it is of little surprise then that modernity takes a different form with the change of its location, especially when the location is saturated with a history, tradition, and culture drastically different from those that have prevailed in the Western world. And "just as there is a non-Muslim modernity, there should also be a Muslim modernity" (*RH*, 17). While certain modernities rested on industrial or economic achievements, Muslim modernity will rest on morality and ethics, for the "Islamic time" (*al-zaman al-Islāmī*) is an "ethical time."[2]

Yet, the very concept of modernity (*ḥadātha*) appears to be entwined with particular agents. Those who take charge of "their time" are the moderns of the age. The Arabic root from which the term derives (*Ḥ.D.Th.*) connotes the notion of substantiation in time, of happening, occurring as a new phenomenon—hence the meaning of "new" given to the term *ḥadīth*. To be truly modern is to lead this new time, to create your own substantiation of it. "Modernity represents the rising up of any *umma* (community, "nation") to assume the duty of fulfilling the obligations of an age, this making it the charge of the age to the exclusion of others. It has the responsibility to undertake these obligations for the purpose of the full realization of humanity." *Ḥadātha*, "in short, is an *umma* taking charge of its age's obligations."[3]

Umma here appears to be a plastic concept. It refers to Muslim and non-Muslim groupings. Muslims themselves can constitute more than one *umma*. Accordingly, there can be more than one version of Islamic modernity, even concurrently. What has obtained in the West can also obtain in the no smaller and no less diverse Muslim world. Yet, in no case will Islamic modernity, *in any of its variants*, fail to give priority to the ethical dimension, since this is what is unique about its emergence as a modernity. Islamic modernity, Taha seems to say, either is moral in its nature and core or is no modernity at all. And precisely because its identity wholly consists of this element, Islamic modernity "will rise to heights" that will surpass those moral or ethical practices present in the Western varieties of modernity. Furthermore, consistent with his insistence on practical ethics and on praxis as the measure

of human kind, Taha's aim is to demonstrate that the "modern act" (modernity as an act or as a practice) finds its highest and most refined manifestation in Islamic practices as in no other.[4] That this project may result in multiple Islamic modernities is seen as further support for his vision. Whatever form of modernity any "variety of Islam" develops, the ethical paradigm must always stand.

<div align="center">II</div>

But what is modernity? Among the multiple definitions of modernity, our author argues, is one that claims it to be a "continuous historical epoch" that started in Western countries during the last few centuries[5] and subsequently spread to the entire world. Scholars disagree on the duration of this epoch, taking it to range from two to five centuries. The longer periodization sees modernity go through the Reformation, the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, the Technical Revolution, and currently the Information Revolution.[6] Some define it as the rise of rationality, progress, and freedom, while others view it as the exercise of these three forms through science and technicalism or technique. Many have regarded it as "a break with tradition," a "quest for the new," an act of "abolishing the sacred from the world," or a process of "rationalization" and "democratization." In light of all these diverse definitions, perhaps the only conclusion one can draw is that modernity is an incomplete project.[7]

Although some of these definitions are better informed than others, all of them, Taha tells us, fall in the same trap of constructing modernity in such a way as to make it seem a wondrous historical creature, an omnipotent god from whose grip there is no escape. "This conception of modernity is in fact nonmodern because it transposes modernity from a procedural, rational conception to the rank of the fictitiously sacred" (*RH*, 24). Accordingly, Taha argues, it is a priority to rid ourselves of the "objectification" involved in the definition of modernity by means of differentiating between two sides or aspects of the phenomenon: the spirit (*rūḥ*)[8] of modernity, on the one hand, and its reality or real manifestations (*wāqiʿ*), on the other (*RH*, 24). For Taha, the latter has thus far been characteristically Euro-American, while the former is the property of humanity in its entirety, since the sources of this spirit extend back to the history of all civilizations (*RH*, 31). It is telling that

Taha's conception of modernity and its sources allows for the possibility, if not "likelihood," that "certain principles of modernity's spirit" (*mabādi' hādhihi al-rūḥ aw baʿḍuhā*) have materialized in past cultures, and in ways that may have differed from what the contemporary West has accomplished. And it is just as likely that it may materialize in still different forms in any of man's future societies (*RH*, 31).

The spirit of modernity rests on three foundations or principles, all of which are regarded as indispensable to any modern project. The first of these is the "principle of majority," which one can easily argue is an iteration of Kant's ideas in "What Is Enlightenment?" In fact, in expounding this principle, Taha relies on this philosopher and his tract explicitly (*RH*, 25). One of modernity's key principles is that it realizes the movement of the individual or group from a state of mental minority to a state of intellectual majority, with the former described as a condition in which rational autonomy is lacking, and where an external or higher authority is needed for guidance. This adherence to external authority may take various forms. It may be a willing and knowing submission to the authority of another's thinking, in which the results and conclusions of this thinking are adopted as one's own, without rational or critical scrutiny. It may also be copying another's way of thinking and adopting it, through processes of rational justification, as one's own, as if it were original to one. Finally, the imitation can be entirely unconscious, whereby an intimate or close affinity with another's way of seeing and living in the world spontaneously leads him to blind copying.

The principle of majority (*mabda' al-rushd*) thus rests on two foundations. The first, rational autonomy, requires that each individual must legislate for herself or himself those acts that must be commissioned and those that must not, so much so that this self-legislation in turn becomes the foundation for the formation of the individual's subjectivity (*fa-tarsakh bi-dhālika dhātiyyatuhu*). Accordingly, individuals who have attained intellectual (in contradistinction to biological or legal) majority are free in movement and strong in character. The second foundation is "creativity,"[9] which requires that the individual anchors his deeds and speech in new values that are either self-invented or reinvented. In the latter case, an older value is subjected to such an autonomous self-legislative process that it becomes an entirely new one.[10] Clearly, it is in this "reinvention" of older values—those that derive from the *turāth*—that Taha wishes to anchor his own project (*RH*, 36–38).

The second principle is that of critique (*mabda' al-naqd*),[11] regarded as an attainment of a state of mind antithetical to belief (*iʿtiqād*), where something is thought to be the case without there being evidence in support of that belief (*RH*, 42–47). Why Taha chooses the term *iʿtiqād* is not clear, for this term does not preclude the meaning of belief (ultimately) derived through rational inquiry.[12] The notion of "unthinking" conformity in the sense he describes is better translated as *taqlīd*, although we know that even this term can at times bear a certain measure of intellectual autonomy.[13] In any event, he takes the principle of critique to be the opposite of *iʿtiqād*, namely, knowledge or belief will always rest on evidence and argument, and is derived through two methods, the first of which is the act of subjecting all natural phenomena, social institutions, and history and all else to rational scrutiny or rationalization (*taʿqīl*). The natural sciences, bureaucracy, and capitalism are foremost and excellent examples of progress (*taqaddum wa-taṭawwur*) toward that end. These areas of scientific achievement, known as technoscience, have been commandeered by the Ellulian sense of *technique*,[14] whereby both science and its fate are determined by technicalism, with science's original intent long since subverted.

The second method is what our philosopher calls differentiation (*tafṣīl*, *tafrīq*),[15] namely, changing the nature of a thing from a state of homogeneity to one of difference, and this for the purpose of understanding and controlling its various elements. The method has manifested itself in various areas of life, including epistemology, science, law, ethics, the fine arts, theory, practice, and much else; it includes other modernity-based phenomena, such as the separation between church and state, between religion and morality, and between religion and rationality, among others.

It is to be noted here that in Taha's doctrine *iʿtiqād* itself is not a purebred or axiomatic critical apparatus, but must itself rest somehow on given assumptions and latent premises, since critique must ultimately rest on or posit some prior epistemic foundations. In the final analysis, however, the critic will perforce have to ground his critique in unexamined premises, whether religious or secular. Otherwise, if every critique-premise must depend on a prior critique-premise, then an infinite regress (and possibly a petitio principii) inevitably ensues (*RH*, 196). It would seem, then, that the difference between *intiqād* (critiquing) and *iʿtiqād* is one not of truth or objectivity, but rather of reflection. If both of these ultimately rest upon *iʿtiqād*-presuppositions, then no claim to objectivity or truthfulness can be

made. Rather, it is critique, and not *iʿtiqād*, that gives meaning and original intent to particular choices. Taha's distinction seems to bestow a philosophical veneer upon the adage that only an examined life is worth living.

The third is the principle of universality (*mabda' al-shumūl*),[16] since one of modernity's foundations is the universalizing of particulars, whereby values of a limited scope, or values adopted by a limited and particular cultural community, are claimed to be universal. This is accomplished through two techniques: extensibility (*tawassuʿ*) and generalizability (*taʿmīm*). Extensibility refers to the phenomenon of mutual influence within a single modern society, whereby a particular act or a particular achievement produces ramified effects on all other areas within that society. Generalizability refers to the transcendence of one society's technical accomplishments and values of freedom to other societies, resulting in the erasure of cultural and historical differences between and among what are otherwise very different societies. Due to the extraordinary pace of technical developments, generalizability has gained progressive speed, leading to the new age of globalization (*RH*, 54–56).

III

Now, the spirit of modernity is emphatically said to be an ideal (*mithāl*), represented in a set of principles and ideas that possess nearly countless applications. Each application is by necessity bound by the reality of its own particular premises, or by certain givens that determine its shape and form. Western modernity is thus nothing more than one (though admittedly the "most famous")[17] applied representation of this spirit; still, Taha reasserts, it is also possible to say that even here there are different versions of the applications within the West itself. It is also possible that one application, in the West or elsewhere, is better or worse than another, since an application is always and inevitably an approximation of the spirit (*RH*, 30).

In one important sense, Taha's distinction between the spirit and reality of modernity, however seemingly problematic, is not entirely unfamiliar. From the American constitutional theorists to the various critics of the Enlightenment, a claim is often made that the founding principles of such systems (U.S. Constitution or lofty Enlightenment ideas) have been violated in favor of a skewed application. Equally common are the many voices

condemning the practices of certain religionists or Marxists as stark violations of the principles of the religion they profess to follow or of the ideas and philosophy that Marx and Engels laid down. To the extent that all these are ordinary phenomena, so is Taha's distinction between spirit and application.

What may seem more problematic is his claim that the roots of modernity's spirit are not the work or product of Western society alone, shunning the claim that it is an ex nihilo creation of the West. Modernity is thus said to be the product of human society in its various stages of development, going back to early epochs of history, Western or not. As I stated earlier, this vision of modernity allows Taha to claim that modernity's spirit—because it is a common human legacy—can be realized in any society and in fact was realized in earlier societies (*mujtamaʿāt māḍiya*) in ways different from those achieved in the West (*RH*, 31). Thus, both temporally and spatially, modernity is not exclusively Western or culture-specific in any sense. Modernity could have conceivably existed in the Middle Ages, and can equally be the property of the Chinese, the Africans, or any other group at any other time.

Of course there is a legitimate place for the position that the distant roots of modernity are not exclusively European, and this is by no means an extraordinary argument. All cultures and "civilizations" arise among preexisting cultures and on the ruins of others, thus absorbing certain configurations of value and even adopting institutions from these predecessors. Cultures also continue to interact with other surrounding cultures, and in the process of interaction (not always evenhanded or devoid of hegemonic influences) cultures shape one another. In modern Europe, for instance, the project of colonialism was never a one-way street: the identity of Europe was largely shaped by its experiences in the colonies.[18] This is not to mention the long stretch of European history from the twelfth or thirteenth centuries to the seventeenth, which owes much to Islamic cultural influences, from medicine and mathematics to philosophy, law, mercantile trade, and the all-important institutions of the university and public endowments and trusts.[19] In these senses, Taha is quite right in saying that the roots of modernity are not exclusively European and that Europe could not have invented modernity independently or ex nihilo.

However, it is another matter altogether to argue that the spirit of modernity (1) is universal, i.e., that it is, *on principle*, the creation and thus property of all human societies ab initio, and *not* a matter of spreading *modern*

European values by hook or crook to the rest of the world; and (2) could have conceivably materialized in any "premodern" or "nonmodern" period. As a matter of strict historical analysis, the debt that Renaissance and early modern Europe incurred to other civilizations and cultures is not to be confused with the *re*configuration and *particular* modes of assimilation of the borrowed elements within the large-scale production of European Enlightenment and modernity. These elements had obviously existed and continued to exist in other cultures—especially in Islamdom, India, and China—long before they made inroads into Europe, but it is entirely unclear how they could have led to the rise of modernity in these cultures *before* Europe made of them something altogether different, something we have aggregately come to call modernity. Thus the alleged presence of a particular modern element in a particular historical culture can in no way constitute evidence to the effect that premodern culture was modern (which, in fact, is a contradiction in terms). This is so because the culture-specific structural and epistemic use of a particular element is never an objective and invariable reality that possesses a predictable capacity for interaction with the surrounding environment. The concept and institution of the university, for instance, were a European borrowing from Islam, but it is hardly accurate to argue that learning and education, supposedly the primary function of the university, took on the same forms of knowledge and teleological aspirations in Europe as they did in Islamdom.[20] Rather, all such borrowings possess extendable and mutable internal values that allow them to be refitted, *epistemologically*, into drastically different structures, with the university, again, being a prime example.[21]

But there is another sense in which modernity is claimed by general scholarship to be universal, which does not have to do with its historical roots but rather with the processes that *constituted* the modern project itself. Scholars have increasingly argued, for instance, that this project evolved through a series of economic and material developments that required an attendant system of coercion and discipline, one that *presupposed* these developments. As I have argued elsewhere, however, non-European cultures upheld certain ethical benchmarks within their central domains, benchmarks that set limits on what can and cannot be done.[22] For the European colonists to be able to exploit the Haitians, the Amerindians, and untold others in the manner that they did; to subjugate them as machines rather than employ them as humans; to subject them to unprecedented forms of

slavery and to merciless conceptions of property; to develop these experiments into a system of coercion and discipline in a Foucauldian fashion; to turn all this around and further colonize the world with a view to enriching their coffers, *reengineering the colonized as new subjects in the process*; and finally to cultivate genocide as a weapon when other means failed—to do all this, they must have *already* been in possession of, or in the process of possessing,[23] a worldview that did away with that benchmark. Had that benchmark been eliminated in Quing Dynasty China, China would have most likely developed a "project" similar or nearly identical to that of European modernity.[24] Likewise, had material, scientific, and mercantile sophistication been a sufficient initial condition for the rise of a modernity, Islam too, with its colossal premodern economy and advanced sciences, would have become *modern* before Europe did, especially between the tenth and fifteenth centuries.[25]

None of these phenomena—not the "economy," science, or Foucauldian discipline—nor their cumulative and dialectical effect can explain the rise of modernity and its genocidal nature *without the prior conditions* that made all of them thinkable and indeed feasible. In other words, to make colonialism qua colonialism *the* prerequisite for the rise of modernity necessarily entails a circular argument. Whatever vaccine, technology, or scientific method Europeans appropriated from the colonies or, earlier, from Islamic lands were, like imported Chinese gunpowder or Indian medicine, put to uses and purposes considerably and *qualitatively* different from those for which they were ostensibly intended by their original inventors. Like free labor, these technologies had existed for centuries in Asia and the West Indies before Europe encroached upon the world. The extraordinarily violent nature of European rehabilitations of these technologies can only be explained with reference to a worldview and a structure of thought that were uniquely European. Free labor, which could have been found anywhere, including in Europe itself (think of feudalism), is not an explicans. Furthermore, the geographical locations of the various colonial experiments are nothing more than contingent, situational features; the thought structure and frame of mind behind them were *uniquely and exclusively* European. In terms of "agency," design, thinking, contrivance, manipulation, and overall conception, the indigenous peoples had nothing to do with these experiments except in their positions as victims of European colonialist projects. That colonialism is neither a derivative nor an accidental attribute of

modernity but one that *constitutes modernity's structures and condition* is a proposition that I take for granted.[26] Thus, to distinguish between the thought structure (which Taha characterizes as modernity's "principles") and the actual *modus operandi* of Europe as a colonialist entity (what he calls "application of [modernity's] principles") *is to miss the organicity of the relationship between the two.* It is, furthermore, to fall under the spell of the ideological myth fostered by the European distortion of what are otherwise deemed the "lofty values of the Enlightenment."[27]

In addition, and as a matter of strict historical analysis, the principle of majority, in the manner in which Taha invokes it, is specifically, *and admittedly*, Kantian. As mentioned, Taha explicitly invokes Kant when he introduces this principle, thereby giving it, as Kant does, a universal validity meant to apply to all historical zones, cultures, and civilizations, down to the present. And it is here where the distinction between the spirit and "reality" or application of modernity seems problematic. Kant's manifesto "What Is Enlightenment?" is a simplified statement of his general philosophy of the autonomous rational will, a philosophical triad (freedom, rationality, will) central to his overall thinking. Any observer free or critical of a Eurocentric outlook can readily see that Kant was, in everything he argued, very much European. In "What Is Enlightenment?," as in almost all his writings on reason, will, and especially autonomy, he was *reacting* to several centuries' worth of Church and monarchial abuses of Europe's population; his was a particularly intense context-specific European experience of tyranny that cannot be readily extended to other cultures. Seen as a vehicle of this tyranny, then, religion and the religious thus come to epitomize for Kant the very stuff of immaturity, against which he systematically militated.

It is possible, however, that Taha identifies with the Kantian concept of the "spirit" because he thinks that today's Muslims suffer from the same bondage vis-à-vis European hegemony as Europeans themselves had suffered at the hands of their Church and monarchs. But even if we accept this shared denominator as a valid argument, the concept of the "spirit" can hardly be universalized, both spatially and transhistorically. Furthermore, the Kantian "spirit" was an attempted revolution—or at least a decisive rebellion—against the whole of European history as a story of religious and political tyranny. Kant could hardly find anything useful in the so-called European Dark Ages. But this abhorrence of earlier periods is scarcely a condition with which Muslims, including Taha, can identify. Muslims' relationship to their

past is dramatically different from the European relationship to its coun-
terpart. Despite the successful stereotyping in Orientalist discourse of the
invention known as "Oriental despotism," tyranny remains far less integral
to Islamic history than to Europe's. But more important is the stark fact that
Taha's doctrine of *waṣl/ittiṣāl* (i.e., that continuity with tradition is assumed
until the contrary is proven) runs against the foundational assumptions of
the Kantian rupture with what is otherwise a history defined by tyranny
and bondage.

Nor is this all. It is odd that the universal principles of modernity's spirit
identified by Taha do not include—either as an independent category or as
a subprinciple—the component of morality and ethics, which he elsewhere
regards as the cornerstone of an ideal conception of modernity. This is puz-
zling, even if we assume that the ethical component or contribution is one
that belongs exclusively to the Islamic form(s) of modernity's realization. If
it is indeed the case that morality and ethics are not principles of moder-
nity's spirit writ large, then one would be compelled to argue that they are,
when all is said and done, only contingent and accidental features of a pos-
sible Islamic modernity, and not essential to his project.

The principle of extensibility seems an equally odd idea for our philoso-
pher to include in his notion of the spirit of modernity. Or is it? It appears
that Taha does not object to a universalizing process of globalization that
"erases historical and cultural difference."[28] He does not ask whose values
should or will erase the others' values, because for him modernity is the
common property of humanity, and so even globalization is agreeable in
principle, even *as* a principle. In a chapter in *Rūḥ al-Ḥadātha*, he levels a cri-
tique against globalization,[29] mainly in terms of its materialism[30] and
considerable lack of ethical content. Fix this problem, he seems to say, and
globalization will be rendered moral and ethical, and thus good and wel-
come. But Taha does not ask whether or not the injection of structural moral
and ethical content into the vision and practices of globalization will allow
it to survive its current form and structure (so that it can still be recog-
nized as such and called by the same name). Globalization is not merely the
massive and speedy movement of capital across the globe, and it is not just
making our big old world a global village. He is aware that some cultures and
culture-specific practices and traditions will be adversely affected, but this
he does not seem to mind as long as the warp of globalization is woven into
a moral woof. Which compels us to ask: Assuming that globalization as we

know it (and what other do we really know?) can be ethicized, how does this "improved globalization" serve Taha's philosophic agenda?

One can only speculate that, for Taha, the only antidote to the morally problematic form of current globalization is a globalized (and thus "extensible" and universalized) infusion of moral content, one that is characteristically Islamic in content and form (*RH*, 86–90). Taha thus adopts the same characteristics of Western globalization as integral to the spirit of modernity, despite the fact that modernity did not develop such potent forms of globalization until very late. He is in effect arguing that just as Euro-America has the right to dictate a particular vision of globalization (as an integral part of *Western* modernity), so does Islam. Of course he is not advocating the use of violence or any threat of it in this ethical venture, not only because he offers a peaceful and pacifist alternative of fair and amicable exchange of ideas (which he does), but also because any form of violence would clearly run against the very principles of justice and morality he is advocating.[31]

However, the question remains: Why does Taha approve of globalization as a project that necessarily entails the erasure of cultural differences between and among what are otherwise very different societies? By slipping into this position, is he uncritically accepting an ethically pernicious practice that clearly runs against the core of his theory? Is he, in other words, aware that what *constitutes* globalization is precisely its structural makeup as an amoral, if not unethical, phenomenon? How does he, for instance, distinguish between globalizing practices and the practices of multinational corporations? If the globalization of late modernity is largely *the work* of these corporations, then what does it mean to embark on a project that would have as its chief aim the ethicization of the corporation? Is there an Islamic way, any way, to ethicize the corporation? Can the corporation and along with it globalization be ethicized and survive as such? Whatever answers are given to these questions, the challenge remains lodged in the structural connections between globalization and the corporation (and of course much else). If the corporation qua corporation is not ethically sustainable, then how can one continue to advocate the legitimacy of globalization—which largely rests on the viability of the corporation—in the first place? I will take up some of these issues when pursuing Taha's discourse on globalization in some detail later. For now, I return to my focus on his notion of modernity's spirit.

It seems to me that Taha's acceptance of differentiation or distinction as integral to the definition of modernity is problematic. This modern feature can also be aptly termed fragmentation, whereby one and the same reality is parceled out and categorized into discrete and separate components, and usually for the purposes of calculation, measurement, analyzability, and epistemic control and, ultimately, with a view to material and psychoepistemic domination. Taha recognizes that the purpose of this "differentiation" is what he calls *ḍabṭ*, namely, verification and control (the Arabic term has a wide spectrum of meaning, ranging from financial accounting and book-keeping, to controlling in a general sense as well as downright seizing, sequestering, surveillance, or domination). However, he clearly does not allow for domination, control, or hegemony (*haymana*). And this is precisely where a blind spot may be identified, because failing such identification could result in the charge that he overlooks what may be deemed a major feature of modernity, one that numerous philosophers and scholars have brought to our attention as central and indeed essential to the modern project. We will discuss this point further in the next section, but for now we must also note that differentiation or fragmentation has created, as I have shown elsewhere,[32] the very characteristics of modernity that Taha seeks to reform.

<center>IV</center>

When expounding the principles of the spirit of modernity, Taha is quick to note how certain aspects of these principles were misused or misapplied, resulting in situations contrary to this "spirit" or what might be termed its "original intent." As an instance of such perversions of modernity's spirit, he cites the rationalization of the technocratic field, which was intended to be a tool and a means for the improvement of the human condition and the liberation of man from his own whimsical and arbitrary conduct, only to become, for modern man and woman, the master rather than the servant. In this context, though, how do we distinguish between spirit and application? More importantly, how does one know that the spirit, or at least certain aspects of it, is not *inherently* given to excesses that will convert what is (well) intended into its opposite? This critique goes to a number of major modern phenomena and institutions that have

made modernity what it is, namely, capitalist in its classic, liberal, and neo-liberal forms, with a modern state that is presumably a sort of social contract application, the pervasive practice of the principle of autonomy, and much else.

Our consideration in the previous paragraph further calls into question the validity of the "spirit of modernity" as a historically viable concept. As a strict matter of history, few thinkers and scholars would be willing to risk the claim either (1) that modernity could have developed, say, the system of capitalism as a contingent feature of the modern project, and without its having any *structural* relation to its "spirit" and principles (especially insofar the first principle of majority is concerned, and which Taha clearly extends to the concept of autonomy); or (2) that, again, the system of capitalism is nothing more than a misapplication of the spirit and its principles, or an altogether unintended consequence, having nothing to do with these principles in the first place. We must therefore question the historicity of the distinction between spirit and its historical and cultural location, on the one hand, and between principles and their applications, on the other. And once we do so, we must also be prepared to question whether Taha's concept of modernity's spirit is sustainable within the content and form of his overall project.

Nonetheless, there remains synthetic space to argue that this problematic in Taha's theory can be solved and that it is not detrimental to his overall philosophy. If the idea is to reform the project of modernity in Islam and engage the rest of the world in this reform—which I believe captures our philosopher's ambitions—then the spirit of modernity cannot be derivable from a uniquely European experience, much less from Kant, one of its major proponents. To do so is to start on the wrong foot. It is to militate against Taha's own insistence on the continuing and continuous relevance of the *turāth* as the source of the modern Islamic "self," however much he wishes to critique and correct that tradition's relevance to the imperatives of the "contemporary age." The spirit, therefore, cannot be derived via the European Enlightenment and its Kants, but must, in order to yield the desired results, ultimately be found, or anchored in, the *turāth*.

It is not clear, then, why a distinction between maturity and critique should be made. If Kant is a valuable reference, he did not make such a distinction, nor can such a conceptual framework for the distinction be found in the terrain of the *turāth*.[33] For Kant, the emergence out of immaturity

(*Unmündigkeit*) *constituted an identity* with having "courage to use your own understanding,"[34] to think for yourself, to critique (in the public domain).[35] To be "mature" *is both to think for yourself and to critique.* Furthermore, if, in the final analysis, critique and "thinking for yourself" are at issue, then they find a robust substantiation in the mainstream traditions of Islam, namely, in the concept, theory, and practice of *ijtihād.* There is no critique or mature thinking without *ijtihād,* a wide-ranging concept that can accommodate any and every intellectual activity. Yet, there is the added advantage that *ijtihād,* revised mutatis mutandis, retains its organic and structural ties with the *turāth* (which itself must be freed from the hegemony of Orientalist discourse, clearly a target of Taha's project).

In its full range and depth, *ijtihād* is thus better suited for both the principle of majority and the principle of critique, even if these are combined, as they should be. For *ijtihād* can, at a minimum, accomplish the tasks that Taha set for these two concepts. If by them he meant to liberate both the "Arab" *and* his mind from European hegemony, which I think is the burden he places upon them, then *ijtihād* demands *both* intellectual autonomy (its fundamental requisite) *and* an insistence on the discursive fields of ʿ*ilm* that have constituted the tradition, particularly in its ethical formation and thrust. This approach has the added advantage of avoiding the problematic implications of critique, since it is eminently arguable, as Taha himself contends, that critique, in the fashion of the Enlightenment, can easily lead, as it indeed did, to the rise of the much detested "civilization of speech."[36] The latter will be seen in due course to have an intrinsic power to militate against practical ethics *as a source of theoretical knowledge.*[37] *Ijtihād*, therefore, not only fits better within Taha's project, but in fact also succeeds in avoiding unnecessary problems.

Nor does it serve Taha's purposes to harness the principle of universality, for this conception, especially in the ways the Enlightenment articulated it, was extensively utilized for colonialist and imperialist ambitions.[38] The point is that, as with maturity and critique, the act of carrying over these concepts or "principles" from the Enlightenment necessarily burdens the Islamic borrowing with the weight of Euro-specific history and concerns, not all of which were the lot of Islam and Muslims. Just as "critique" is implicated in European forms of reason that Taha staunchly rejects, universalism is implicated in the actual manifestations of this reason in the way it conceived and universalized the *mission civilisatrice.*

If Taha's purpose is to advocate for an inter-Arab and inter-Islamic dialogue, and if it is to bring the fruits of these dialogues to the table of global discussion, then his impressively developed concept of ḥiwār (dialogue, communication, and dialectical and "scholarly disputation," all at once)[39] is a sufficient condition for his program, replacing universalism with a long-standing Islamic concept and practice, one that runs counter to imperialism and domination, to boot. Even if we take into full consideration his argument that "Islamic modernity," once accomplished, should be able to transcend its specifically Islamic locals to flourish in the world at large,[40] his method and telos are dialogue, argument, and communication, but certainly not violent conquest. And yet, this universalizing mission smacks of the pitfalls that his project is explicitly designed to avoid!

In response to my foregoing critique (see appendix), Taha justifies his act of distinguishing the spirit from the application of modernity in what appears to me a tactical way. The Kantian and "modernist" conceptions hold such a sway (istibdād, lit. "tyrannical" power) over the minds of both Muslims and Westerners that he found himself compelled "to employ the modern language that is familiar" to them.[41] Similarly, the need to access the Western intellectual milieu through dialogue and communication dictates "the use of their own concepts, as a way to open up new venues of thought they have hitherto not considered."[42]

Because the distinction between spirit and application is tactical, it now emerges that it is not absolute; rather, the distinction or "separation is relative."[43] One reason for this relativity is that no application can be had without spirit, but "the spirit of modernity can exist without its application."[44] The point he is making here, I think, is that when application exists there will have to be some kind of a relationship between the application and the spirit from which it ensues, hence the "relative," but not radical, separation. The upshot of Taha's response on this point is that a "differentiation" (farq) can be discerned between spirit and application, but not "an absolute separation" (muṭlaq al-faṣl).[45]

But Taha goes on to argue that the claim to a "fusion" (iltiḥām) of spirit and application causes three problems. The first, which I think is most central to his project, is that upholding fusion makes of modernity a single phenomenon, a singularity belied by the fact, mentioned earlier, that the Western moderns themselves acknowledge varieties of modernity in their applications, not to mention their own differences as to its definition. This

is central to his project because upholding "fusion" (a radical interpretation of my position) precludes the possibility of proposing an alternative to current modernity, a given on which his entire project rests. Furthermore, he continues, the claim of fusion not only creates indistinctions due to the elision of spirit, thereby recognizing modernity as nothing more than an application; it also makes of modernity a unique civilizational event that has neither a historical precedent nor a future evolution or end.[46] "Surely, modernity has roots in the past, roots whose forms have faded but whose effects have remained. Nor could it come into existence ex nihilo. It will have effects in the future, and will also continue to change its forms, because it will not cease to exist all of a sudden."[47]

The second problem raised by the claim of fusion is that this claim in effect confuses spirit with application. Taha does not put it so bluntly, but this is the effect of his carefully crafted language. He seems to say that the spirit is beyond reproach, and I suspect that to him any critique of modernity must a priori belong to its application. This is because the "meanings of the spirit" of modernity are connected to the meanings of *fiṭra*,[48] which is to say that they are intrinsic to human nature. In fact, the meanings of modernity's spirit are an expansion of *fiṭra*'s meanings (*tawsīʿan lil-maʿānī al-fiṭriyya*),[49] and therefore no less irreproachable.

Finally, the third problem is that fusion commits the fallacy of what Taha calls "radical contextualization" (*siyāqiyya jadhriyya*). *Siyāqiyya*, plain and simple, acknowledges that the "value of a phenomenon's meanings" changes with the change of circumstances, whereas radical contextualization does not acknowledge changes in such values, thus treating one practical manifestation of modernity as identical to any other, and failing to distinguish between one application and the next.[50] This critique, it seems to me, also goes to the issue of elision.

I think I have already said much in critique of Taha's distinction between spirit and application, but it may be worth adding a few points here. First, it is clear that Taha is not interested only in advancing ideas as ideas but is also anxious to make his ideas palatable, both for his Muslim audiences and for Western intellectuals.[51] This is the meaning of my characterization of the distinction he proffers as tactical. Second, because he is careful not to alienate his audience by casting his philosophy in an impalatable form, he finds himself compelled to retain the very concept of modernity, however objectionable he in fact finds it. To argue for a totalizing departure from

modernity would simply be too radical a move. This second point goes to a tactical move as well, a way to tell his readers what he wants but keep them listening.[52] Third, his claim about confusing the spirit with application, including the bulk of language about elision, can be turned around in favor of the argument that the spirit is integral to the application(s). We recall that the second and third of the spirit's principles are critique (*naqd*) and universalization (*shumūl*). I have said enough about the entanglements of the latter with colonialism and hegemony, and argued, along with a host of scholars, that the theology of progress and the *mission civilisatrice*—both subsumable under *shumūl*—are genealogically inseparable from Europe's assault on the world. But equally important is the second principle of critique. If the spirit of modernity is universal, as Taha is plainly arguing, then this spirit, transhistorical and universal, must be ethical too. And if this is the case, then at least one of the three principles of the spirit must contain, or consist of, an ethical substance. For critique in Taha's thought is another word for rationalization (*taʿqīl*, *ʿaqlana*; *RH*, 26), and this rationalization, to meet the standards of Islamic modernity, must be lodged in what he calls enhanced reason (*ʿaql muʾayyad*), wholly defined by the ethical dimension. And if this is the case, then critique is the most likely candidate for bearing this ethical charge, for it is the *epistemological source* of the other two principles (which, in any case, seem to lack both ethical structure and ethical substance).

Now, if the spirit, including necessarily *its* component of critique, is the property of humanity at large, then we might ask how this critique manifested itself among the builders of Western modernity. Insofar as I can tell, there is nothing that could give manifestation to the critique other than the set of ideas that dominated what we know by the name of Enlightenment, ideas that I have elsewhere identified as the central domains of this intellectual movement.[53] And integral to these ideas, which gave articulation to Enlightenment reason, is the paramount and commanding distinction between Is and Ought, a distinction that defined modernity in both "spirit" and application.[54] No one can argue that there existed in Europe's Enlightenment another *paradigmatic* discourse upholding a different, much less antithetical conception, one that would refuse the distinction and still establish itself as the prevalent discourse. It is then safe to say that the spirit of Europe's modernity *paradigmatically* embraced a concept of critique that insisted on the separation of Is and Ought, a separation that Taha rejects

categorically. By his own account, this separation stands along other "unethical" separations, including the one between "state and religion," "religion and ethics," and "ethics and politics" (*RH*, 28). Unlike other, more abstract concepts whose relationship to reality (= application) is often difficult to discern and dissect, the idea of the separation between Is and Ought was integral to the discourse that gave manifestation to the spirit and its critique *as well as* to the application of it throughout the modern project. My argument is this: there is no way of telling what the spirit of modernity looks like outside of discourse, and it is quite plain, I think, that there is an undeniable causal relationship between this hegemonic and paradigmatic discursive separation (spirit) and the havoc that modernity wrought on its human population and natural environment (application). Taha, I think, agrees that this causal link is valid, both logically (spirit) and ontologically (application).

<p style="text-align:center">V</p>

Taha wastes no time in asserting that the first and foremost concern for Muslims is to avoid the pitfalls of the West in the way the "application" of these principles has been performed. The faults of this application are so many that it would seem, he says, that the modern West has been governed by a universal law that may be called "the Law of Converting Aims to their Opposites" (*RH*, 32). Here he lists a series of statements by French writers highly critical of the modern project, all to the effect that modernity is a project that does not know how to control itself and that it leads to regression and backwardness (if not to "barbarity," as argued by René Guénon)[55] as much as it leads to progress.[56] He cites multiple examples as evidence, chief among them that the modern human aimed to dominate nature but nature created effects he did not desire, such as modern diseases. There is also the threat of nuclear destruction, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, explosive population growth, environmental pollution, the Ozone hole, and much else that is equally devastating. And whenever any of these sectors is reformed, the consequences of the reformed field not only continue to produce negative effects; the reformers are increasingly unable to predict and control the effects of their own work.

Likewise, Western modernity has erected a transnational capitalist system that it now cannot control, and whose fate and consequences it cannot

predict. It has also tried to irrevocably sever all its connections with traditional sources of authority, only to discover that these have returned in different forms that are more complex and convoluted than their precursors.[57] What was originally intended to lead to domination over things in the world has turned into its opposite: subordination and servitude. And what was originally meant to lead to freedom and autonomy has instead led to dependency and subjection (*RH*, 33).

This reversal in the Western application is one that involves a myopic vision of what makes for a means and what constitutes an end. It is characteristic of this application that in its first phases the end in the original conception would be achieved by particular means. But as time passes, the means become an end in and of themselves. The concept of change is a prime example: change was required to accomplish certain ends, but what transpired thereafter is that the means itself became an end, with the result that change is now sought after for its own sake. The same can be said of progress, that is, progress now exists for the sake of progress, just as we are taught to believe in "development for the sake of development." Innovation, art, critique, capitalist accumulation of wealth, and much else have fallen into the same pattern (*RH*, 33).

Given the countless ways of realizing the spirit of modernity, and given the vulnerability of these ways to error and loss of self-control, it is abundantly clear that a culture or even subculture should not copy the application of others but should instead exert its utmost effort to find its own way of materializing that spirit. The task is to replicate the ideals—namely, the principles of the spirit—*not to reproduce the applications of others.* This also strongly implies that the application or substantiation of the principles must be genuine and internal (*juwwānī*) to a given culture, since this engagement constitutes its own effort to create a particular and unique form of modernity for itself. Which is to say, furthermore, that the project of application must be creative and inventive in every possible way, and must in no shape or form involve imitating others (*ittibāʿ*).

The current Islamic reality, Taha avers, is nowhere close to this ideal. It fulfills neither the condition of genuine and original (*dākhilī*, lit. internal) production nor the indispensible requirements of inventiveness and creativeness. It simply imitates the Western application of the spirit's principles, and so it is a second-rate application. This imitation does not acknowledge Islam's cultural specificity, because, in its quest to place Islam

within the fold of modernity, it effectively makes possible the obliteration of this specificity at the hands of secular, materialist, anthropocentric, and political hegemonies. Though having the appearance of a negotiative and balancing technique, imitation becomes a formalistic translation of the single ethos that this hegemony imposes. "The truth of the matter," which has escaped contemporary Muslims, is that "modernity and *taqlīd* (= *ittibāʿ* = imitation) can never be concurrent" (*RH*, 35). They are mutually exclusive of each other. And so the proper question to ask is, what are the modalities necessary for transforming Muslim societies from a state of "imitative modernity" (*ḥadātha muqallida*) to another that is truly innovative (*mubdiʿa*)?

Before proceeding to answer this question, our philosopher stresses that every attempt or project to apply the principles in question involves a heavy reliance on underlying assumptions, those beliefs and presuppositions needed for such an engagement. However, some of these "presuppositional givens" (*musallamāt*) may be invalid or defective, leading to a problematic application. This is precisely what happened in the Western application of the spirit's principles, a problematic application we have seen to result in much harm to human life. It therefore behooves us, Taha remarks, to pay special attention to these faulty presuppositions so that the Islamic application can avert them, together with their negative consequences (*RH*, 35–36).

Thus, the Islamic materialization of modernity's spirit must fulfill the following conditions in respect of each of the three principles:

1. The Principle of Majority

We recall that this principle consists of two components, autonomy and creativity. The challenge here is to identify the modalities that allow a transformation from imitation to creative autonomy. For it is futile to deny that Muslims, long dazzled and seduced by the West, have delegated to this seducer the task of thinking on their behalf, resigning their rights to this activity in the process. This resignation, Taha argues, is accompanied by the faulty assumption that the West can think of what is good for Muslims better than they can. It can advance ideas that they can never form on their own. "But this is certainly the worst kind of guardianship" (*RH*, 36).

This "imitating autonomy," an oxymoron, must be ejected from the project of Muslim application, and the way to accomplish this feat is to refute

the underlying premises or hidden presuppositions (*al-musallamāt al-khafiyya*) on which the Western applications of the spirit's principles have rested. Insofar as autonomy is concerned, these presuppositions are as follows.

First, the guardianship (*wiṣāya*) exercised by foreign powers is (re)presented as care for the weak.[58] This presupposition has become a cornerstone in Western versions of modernity, playing a central role in the West's colonizing and hegemonic projects. The presupposition, however, stands in contradiction with the spirit of modernity, because the guardianship of the more powerful will always remain guardianship. When the element of externality or foreignness of this power is added, guardianship becomes even more objectionable. There can be no guardianship concurrent with autonomy.

Second, internal guardianship, or guardianship within the same group, is exclusively associated with the "men of religion" (*RH*, 36–37). Taha rightly argues that this presupposition is false because in traditional Muslim societies the men of religion—the jurists (*fuqahā'*) being chief among them—cannot be shown to have appropriated or controlled political authority, much less to have exercised their own juristic authority in any despotic form. Moreover, as far as they are concerned, a colonizing Europe inverted history and truth to make them "guardians" in the sense of usurpers, when in fact they barely exercised any effective authority. Especially in the modern period, Taha seems to say, these men of religion "do not even think unless they are asked or unless they are given permission to do so" (*RH*, 37). In Europe, by contrast, the Church's excesses are notorious, to the degree that when the Europeans colonized the world, they were already bearing the burden of their own history.[59] With these last words, Taha seems to be saying not only that the projection of the colonizing powers of such abuses onto Islam is intrinsically wrong and fallacious but that it constitutes a full-fledged projection of Europe's own pathologies onto its subjugated peoples.

Third, and perhaps most important for our discussion, is the invalid presupposition that modernity amounts to an autonomy that requires the shedding of any internal guardianship. Since it is clear that the Muslim men of religion did not commit excesses, their entry to modernity would be quite different from that of their counterparts in the West. Therefore, there is no valid justification for Muslims to rid themselves of all forms of religious guardianship. This reversal and inversion of facts are the work of the

colonizer who decided for Muslims what they should rid themselves of and what they should not.

In light of these three false presuppositions pertaining to questions of guardianship, an important task is for Muslims to realize their autonomy and explore the many creative ways it can be attained. They must find their path to correct what the colonizer has inverted, and in the process, they must come to understand that this colonizer is, in fact, the domineering guardian "barring all people from exercising their right to autonomous thinking" (*RH*, 37). Included among the dominated, the jurists and the learned[60] are likewise under an obligation to free themselves of this effective and coercive guardianship. Thus, it is not the jurists' guardianship that must be done away with, but rather the guardianship of colonial powers and foreign hegemony. This is not easy to do, since these hegemonic powers have implanted themselves within the very bodies of the colonized, and are able to speak this hegemony of theirs "through our own tongue[s]." The insidiousness of hegemony, Taha seems to say, goes beyond easy categorization of where the colonizer and colonized locate themselves (*RH*, 37–38).

The second challenge involved in the principle of majority is to identify the modalities that allow a transformation from an imitative to an "innovative creativity."[61] True creativity innovates even where a prior innovation has already been achieved; it re-creates an earlier creative act, and goes beyond the imaginative boundaries of the original. Alas, Taha laments, Muslims are a far cry from creativity. When they encounter a Western product, they can see nothing else, much less any possibility of re-creating and reinventing that product to suit their own needs and circumstances. They even go further in their zeal of adoption, often investing such products with sacred status, as if they were objects of worship (*RH*, 39).

To remedy this situation, Taha continues, various methods can be suggested. Yet, certain presuppositions that underlie these methods must be subjected to scrutiny. The first is that "the best form of creativity is one that represents a complete rupture with everything." This presupposition is invalid because human beings cannot dissociate themselves from their own circumstances and environment: no life is on a blank slate. Anyone who thinks or claims they can is merely living an illusion, since it is inevitable that they will, consciously or unconsciously, invoke elements from the recent or distant past. Modernity, after all, is not about rupture and dissociation for their own sake, but rather about creating better human beings. On their

own, ruptures can never guarantee the attainment of a better human con-dition, much less the realization of an ethically formed human. The mea-sure of modernity is "rais[ing] humanity" to a higher ethical state, not flex-ing those muscles that can effect severance and dissociation. Rupture may be present without ethical improvement and ethical improvement may obtain without rupture, which is to say that no law of concurrence can govern the relationship between the two. "The Islamic way into modernity may therefore resort to rupture when necessary and to continuity when necessary, for it is a modernity of value not a modernity of time."[62]

The second presupposition is that "creativity invents need and fulfills it as well," a presupposition that is certainly invalid in its absolute form (*RH*, 40). Creativity is desirable and good if it invents spiritual and ethical needs, for these inevitably enrich subjectivities and endow them with refined eth-ical and artistic predispositions. However, the invention of need is far more likely to occur in the context of life's material aspects than in spirituality, ethics, or art. The creative invention of need has unfortunately been mostly the work of capitalist ventures and corporations who produce an endless array of products that are themselves designed to increase consumption. Since the ultimate purpose of such "creative" ventures is the garnering of endless profit, this "creativity" should be shunned, and the second presup-position modified accordingly (*RH*, 40).

The Islamic method in this sphere is to restrict these materialistic excesses, and offset any insurmountable materialistic increase by generat-ing an increase in spiritual and ethical needs. This is where Muslims can show "brilliant inventiveness" and creativity (*ʿabqariyya ibdāʿiyya*), thereby contributing to the construction of global modernity (*fī bināʾi ḥadātha ʿālamiyya*). As it stands, modernity is in dire need of filling its moral and spir-itual gap, a gap now variably described in terms of a loss of meaning, loss of authority, absence of purpose, lack of direction, and so on.

Finally, in the third presupposition it is held that the most genuine form of creativity is the one through which the self flourishes most. Without imposing on it proper restrictions, this presupposition cannot be admissi-ble. The restrictions required here amount to the rejection of flourishing if it means the constant and endless quest for satisfying personal desires, without care for the interests and needs of others. Such hedonistic practices are reprehensible and inevitably detrimental to the humanity of the indi-vidual as well as to social ties and society at large.

The "Islamic method" is to increase the flourishing of the self *in conjunction* with a commensurate increase in the flourishing of the other. This communal attitude is meant not only to counteract the modern Western behavioral tendencies toward individualism, selfishness, and narcissism,[63] but also to preclude these disorders from the arena of Islamic practices and ways of living because they would have no place in it ab initio. The Islamic values relevant to personal flourishing in fact run against these Western values with an oppositional force. They insist on certain principles, such as "the good is transitive, not intransitive," "loving the self [only] is a source of unhappiness, not happiness," and "doing good for others is in effect doing good for oneself" (*RH*, 41–42).

On the whole, the Islamic application of the principles of modernity's spirit is an internally creative practice, one that takes its points of departure from within the tradition. It does not entirely dissociate itself from past values, since this is impossible; nor does it accept them all. Certain parts of the tradition must be discarded because they have ceased to be useful. That which remains admissible must undergo scrutiny and must be rethought in creative ways. It makes no sense to adopt the principle of rupture because the past cannot be categorically claimed to be devoid of morally good principles; and if this is the case, then we are bound to adopt these principles—an act of bridging that Taha calls connective creativity (*ibdāʿ mawṣūl*). Thus, the Islamic notion of creativity depends on neither total rupture nor total continuity (*RH*, 42).

2. The Principle of Critique

The first challenge involved in the principle of critique is to identify the modalities that allow a transformation from an imitative to a creative rationalization, this latter, as we have seen, being the first component of this principle. Undoubtedly, Muslims have long been engaged in a thorough critique and rationalization of their heritage, history, and traditions, including their political, legal, and social institutions. Yet, their practices of rationalization do not rest on *their own* principles of critique, nor do they derive from the principles of modernity's spirit. Nor, still, have they scrutinized the tools and methods of critique they have borrowed. Instead, they have accepted what they have been told, namely, these methods are the only ones

conceivable. The absence of independent critique and the hegemonic influence of Western critique have led Muslims to inflict damage on their own history and tradition indiscriminately, as evidenced by their false and dubious claims about their heritage (*RH*, 42).

To avert such harm, part of the task is, again, to identify and interrogate the hidden presuppositions. The first of these presuppositions is that reason comprehends everything (*RH*, 43). Although at first glance this presupposition seems to represent an unshakable foundation of the Western application of the spirit's principles, it turns out to be not so enduring because of the very logic of reason itself. Reason, after all, is self-refutative. First, reason cannot comprehend itself, although it is a thing. A stronger form of reason is required to comprehend reason because that which comprehends must necessarily be more powerful than that which is comprehended. This second form of reason in turn requires yet another, stronger, or higher form of reason to comprehend it, which leads to an infinite regress. Second, reason cannot comprehend everything because the part cannot comprehend or contain the whole—however much we assume that it can grasp the greater part of existence. It is therefore logically impossible for reason to know everything. This is especially true of the Western form of reason, which is recognized as limited even by its advocates. They have come to call it instrumental reason, and have not ceased to criticize it for the harm it has brought unto humanity.[64]

The second presupposition, that "man possesses sovereignty over nature," is fanciful, because sovereignty and domination are the right of the owner over what he owns, but man does not own nature. Nor did he create it in the least; he is no more than a product of it. Were man to own nature, it would, by virtue of this relationship, owe him obedience and would have to conduct itself according to his wishes and orders. But the reality is entirely different. Man continues to be subject to nature, in all its powers and forces. Nonetheless, man thought he could subject it to his own rules, calculations, and forms of knowledge, but none of this has taken him anywhere. Despairing over this, he began to engage in another flight of fancy, which he called a "contract with nature." This contract takes effect when modern man is fully cognizant of the fact that nature has rebelled against his will, and so he stoops to a new low by imagining that such a contract can bind nature and restrain it, in the same manner in which the individuals of a political body enter into "the social contract," another fanciful piece of

work that was imagined as capable of ending the state of war among Europeans (*RH*, 44).[65]

The Islamic way to modern rationalization neither confronts nature nor dominates it; instead, it converses with it, befriends it, and deals with it compassionately (*yurāḥimuhā*). The more its secrets are discovered, the more there is compassion. It is not to be regarded as a sacred realm, although its creator is to be deemed so. Though it is not sacred, nature remains the "Mother of human kind, not its mistress" (*RH*, 45). "Humans came out of its womb just as much as they came out from the womb of their own mothers; and mothers can never be mistresses." This notion of nature transcends the materialist Western notion and outright refuses its trenchant instrumentalism. If nature is nothing like a mistress, then it cannot be used, abused, or discarded. The Tahan conception of nature therefore goes beyond the cold calculations of science and legal contracts. It is an ethical-spiritual conception, concomitant with the understanding that any "contract" or relationship with nature must be one that transcends phenomenological reality and one that takes account of the seen and unseen aspects of the world.[66] "Islamic rationalization thus undertakes to enter an all-encompassing cosmic covenant" (*RH*, 45).

The third presupposition, that "everything is amenable to critique," is also false because it is founded on two invalid assumptions. First, that critique is the exclusive venue through which the truth about all things in the world is attained, when in fact the paths of knowledge cannot be so constrained. Another, in fact oppositional venue of knowledge is the report (*khabar*),[67] which in some cases can yield a degree of knowledge superior to that generated by critique. The latter is always subject to review and reevaluation, and thus open to skepticism and permutation, while the former may contain a truth beyond critique and questioning. From a secular perspective, Taha's epistemic ranking of the *khabar* above knowledge generated by critique may appear jarring. Yet, if the *khabar* is taken to embody or represent, in part or in whole, *higher principles* that *ethical rationality* deems binding, then the secularist might find this long-standing Islamic perspective not only plausible, she may also have to interrogate the modernist, especially liberal, position that advocates a mutative morality, or, as René Guénon called it, "moralism,"[68] which bestows an ethical veneer on an ever-changing justificatory ideology of materialist and technological "development."[69]

The second presupposition is that all things in the world are phenomena, and thus subject to critique. This, however, is a false way of seeing things, since some parts of reality are not phenomena, such as spiritual values and high ideals. To cast doubt on these values and principles would be counter-productive, and so they must be trusted and laid as foundations for action. (This claim, it must be said, should be understood in light of Taha's insistence that all cultures and epistemologies, including the modern Western ones, rely on one form of transcendentalism or another.)[70] The point here is that the Islamic conception cannot limit itself to critique as the sole means for understanding and knowledge. Inasmuch as Habermas's theory calls for communicative action between and among social groups, the Islamic conception calls for a communicative theory between and among the various forms of critique that differ in their nature and in accordance with the fields in which they operate. What is deemed strong evidence or proof in one field may be regarded as weak evidence in another, or not evidence at all in yet another domain of inquiry. The Islamic practice of rationalization therefore must engage a creatively internal modernity (ḥadātha dākhiliyya mubdiʿa), that is, a culture-specific mode of reason that, in the Islamic case, qualifies instrumental reason and subordinates it to an expansive conception that envelops it, binds it, and bestows on it added layers of spiritual and ethical values.

As we have seen, the second component of the principle of critique is differentiation, and so the question here is, again, the manner in which imitative differentiation is transformed into creative differentiation (*RH*, 47). Taha begins his remarks with a critique of the Muslim "modernists" who have overzealously imitated Western modernity in subjecting things to endless, often unwarranted and excessive projects of differentiation. Their favorite arenas have been the separation of modernity from tradition as well as the separation of politics from religion.

An important aspect of the alleged segregation of modernity from tradition is that which involves the Islamic tradition and its relationship with the spirit of modernity, as constituted by the full range of its principles. This claim of separation between these two is false because, first, the aforementioned principles are shared, to one extent or another, by many cultures and traditions, including the Islamic (*RH*, 47).[71] If there are differences in the extent to which these principles penetrated the various cultures and civilizations, the core of these principles and agreement on them are found everywhere. It is false, second, because the Islamic achievements in science

and thought, and Europe's debt to these achievements, make for a strong connection between the principles of modernity's spirit and the Islamic tradition.[72] And it is false, third, because even if we assume that the principles are not found in the Islamic tradition *in reality*, this assumption does not invalidate the proposition that these principles may conceivably be present as a matter of potentiality (*RH*, 48).

It is, again, clear that the unnecessary adherence to what is in effect a Kantian notion of critique has led, as the last paragraph amply demonstrates, to profound tensions in Taha's thesis of the spirit's principles. The qualifications he has just introduced to describe the nature of the presence of *these* principles in Islam amount to lending credence to the proposition that these principles are an organic product of the European experience, not of the Islamic or any other. As in the case of colonialism—apparently relevant to Taha only insofar as it engendered an Islamic form of intellectual slavery, and not as formative of modernity writ large—the spirit and its principles are not critically appraised as being *also formative* of the application of modernity and its deep structures.[73]

It remains clear nonetheless that the Western application and practice of the principle of differentiation is highly problematic, and its ill effects have been multiplied by the unreflective Islamic imitation of it—all the more reason why the presuppositions underlying this principle must be subjected to scrutiny.

The first of these presuppositions is that the separation between the institutions of modernity and religion is an absolute one. Taha here is referring to the paradigmatic secular structure of modernity that relegates religion to the private domain, to be governed and ruled over by the state and its organs. To begin with, there is a confusion here, he says, between church and religion, since the rupture that occurred was not with religion as such but with the church as a political power. The church is no more the sum total of religion than religion is the sum total of the church. This divorce from the church does not amount to the rejection of the Christian faith, because the clerical class that was decimated by European modernity neither amounts to nor represents the faith itself, as evidenced in the pervasiveness of Christianity outside Europe (*RH*, 48–49).

Second, it is incorrect to assume that modernity sprung up suddenly, because it evolved through a long historical processes and was, furthermore, derived from various cultural sources, ranging from the Greek to the

Jewish and Islamic. All these cultures were saturated with a religious spirit, which is to say that this spirit has also infiltrated modernity, shaping certain of its elements and in part defining its direction.[74] Third, modernity has no doubt found it necessary to draw explicitly upon religious concepts, or concepts that originate within the religious realm. This borrowing was conscious at times, but unconscious at others. Suffice it to mention as examples the concepts of life in its positive connotation, perfection as integral to progress, brotherhood as associated with fraternity (Fr. *fraternité*) and solidarity, and time as indicative of—if not governed by a conception of—linear history.[75] Fourth is the fact that among the founders of modernity there obviously were men of religion, including certain leaders of the Italian Renaissance, the Protestants who initiated the Reformation and who are at times associated with the rise of modern capitalism, and famous others, such as Descartes, Newton, Kant, and Hegel, whose ideas were not devoid of "traces" of religious conceptions.[76]

The Islamic method of modern differentiation treats separations as possessing two attributes, the first of which is functionality (*waẓīfiyya*) because these separations are not so much structural or essential (*māhawiyya*) as they are useful for "playing a role" in a particular context. It is well known that roles change with the change of structures and essences, just as they change within the same structure or context. In other words, the "Islamic differentiation" is neither systematic nor systemic, but one that may be occasioned by particular exigencies or specific circumstances. The second attribute that the Islamic practice of differentiation admits is reassembling (*jamʿiyya*), which is to say that distinctions and functional separations between certain elements are not permanent and that the very elements separated in one context may be reunited in another. The contingency of separation has been proven even in Western modernity, where the separation, for instance, "between the political and the economic"[77] has long been abandoned, after being subjected to much criticism (*RH*, 50).

The separation between the political and the religious that Taha heavily criticizes takes the following forms within the Islamic conception and practice: First, the separation is merely one of the many separations to which the "latest developments" in societal institutions—presumably in the application of Western modernity—have led, and so it is not really more deserving of focus and attention than any other separation. Second, the separation, as already stated, is merely functional and is neither essential nor

structural. Put differently, differentiation and separation are derivative principles (*farʿ*), an exception, so to speak, to the rule and original principle (*aṣl*) of "connection" (*waṣl, ittiṣāl*) which governs by default (*RH*, 53). Third, and following from the first conception, the reunification of the two realms may take place with the change of circumstances or when such reunification may prove beneficial for both realms. All things being equal, Taha seems to argue, unification as a principle is superior to separation. The principle's force is such that it is "Muslims' duty" to look for ways to implement this "superior approach," which, in this particular context, might likewise contribute to expanding the concept of politics (a matter that I will take up in detail in chapter 6). It is not clear just what exactly this expansion means, but it is clear enough to Taha that when the concept of positive law as it exists in liberal democracies is subjected to a profound change and eventually replaced by a system that structurally resembles the traditional Sharīʿa,[78] the very concept of Western governance and politics will qualitatively change in the modern Islamic application. When this is effected as a practical reality, the "political act" can beneficially accompany (*yuṣāḥib*) the "religious act," so much so that the unification of the two realms (or acts) can be deemed "the original position." The implication of this original position is that if a separation were to be effected, it would be because there is a special reason or reasons to make an exception necessary (*RH*, 51).

The second presupposition, that the separation between reason and religion (*dīn*) is an absolute one, is likewise invalid because it reduces religion to the irrational (*al-lā-maʿqūl*) on the grounds that religion resorts to the transcendent and the legendary. But this is the Western conception of religion, not the Islamic. The former views religion as a set of irrational creeds and rituals, but the modern Islamic application (as was the case among premodern Muslims) regards it as "states of belief and moral-legal norms," two entirely different conceptions. Even by the very standards of instrumental reason that dominate the Western application, the Sharīʿa norms are mostly rational and fit for incorporation within various, if not all, spheres of modern life. In fact, the Sharīʿa is no less rational than any other aspect of this modernity. Those parts deemed irrational must be subjected to rationalization in accordance with the changing circumstances; or that rationality itself must be reconstructed so as to make it embrace these parts (*RH*, 52).

By the standards of instrumental reason, the last sentence appears rather striking. If the desiderata of "legal ordering" of a society are discipline,

productivity, materialist advancement, the realization of a negative concept of liberty, and the nurturing of the national subject, then Taha's argument will not only fall apart; it will also seem ludicrous while doing so. But if we assume, as we must, that the Islamic modus vivendi and modus operandi Taha is proposing squarely rest on (1) an ethical and mildly mystical cultivation of the subject and the social group, (2) a robust form of positive liberty[79] that is the exclusive domain of the self's cultivation, (3) the assumption that materialism and capitalism (as they have been made dominant in the "European application") are anathema, and (4) a total rejection of the national and political nurturing of the subject,[80] then we will find ourselves in nearly total agreement with the major thrust of the Sharīʿa, not just in terms of its principles, but in terms of its specific regulations and instructions. At the very least, understanding its internal logic—i.e., how it articulates the subject through its internal rules, mechanisms, and imperatives of communal ordering—would constitute a heuristic source from which critique, and even paliatives,[81] can be developed.

Finally, the third presupposition—that differentiation is concurrent with the erasure of the sacred—is null and void because it rests on the faulty assumption that wherever sacredness appears it does so along with the supernatural. This is doubly erroneous because the disappearance of the supernatural (due to the advances of science) does not amount to the disappearance of the sacred. These are altogether two different things. "The world is not merely a totality of phenomena whose enigma must be removed by means of discovering its laws; rather, it is a totality that is ranked as signs (*āyāt*) that bear subtle and delicate meanings indicative of the existence of a creator who resembles nothing else" (*RH*, 52). The discoverers of these laws, the scientists, are rarely unmoved by the magnificence of natural phenomena and the way nature is put to work.[82] Science is no more the understanding of nature as the total sum of its parts than the supernatural is.

The Islamic method governing modern differentiation rests on a fundamental fact, namely, the human is originally a connected or interconnected creature (*kāʾin muttaṣil*), both spatially and temporally. Even if human beings attempt to physically abandon a particular space or time, their soul—or, if you will, their memories, thoughts, or imagination—cannot be so easily erased. It is in the nature of humans to even connect with worlds beyond time and space, which is what we call spirituality. And no matter how sophisticated science may be, the spiritual realm cannot be diminished by new

scientific discoveries, for while these discoveries no doubt obviate the magical and the superstitious, they neither reduce nor eliminate the mysteries of the world. If anything, Taha argues, the more developed these sciences are, the more wondrous the secrets of the world appear and the closer the connection one feels with one's own humanity. It is no wonder then that the disconnected man (*al-insān al-munfaṣil*) of Western modernity finds the world to have lost all meaning, precisely because he has been disconnected from the world's secrets and wondrous workings (*RH*, 53). The consequences of man losing confidence in the world have been immensely destructive. Abused nature has retorted with a wave of punishments for the misdeeds he has committed against it. This disconnection has, in addition, led to the emergence of the phenomenon of extreme fear of death, because for this man there is nothing that lies beyond this world and its time. The consequences of this fear have had incalculable effects.

3. The Principle of Universality

The modalities of transformation from imitative to creative forms also apply to the two categories of the principle of universality, namely, extensibility and generalizability. Insofar as the former is concerned, the spread of modernity in the Muslim world has had adverse effects, beginning with the spread of materialism and technology *before* allotting sufficient time and space for the integration of moral and ethical values. This trajectory, inspired by the Western application, is the reverse of what should have been the case. "True modernity" must *begin* with the moral, followed first by the modernization of intellectual life and institutions, and only then by material improvement and more developed technology. Without the striving of the soul (*mujāhadat al-nafs*)—similar to what Foucault called technologies of the self[83] (but with deeper psychoepistemic dimensions)—there can be no freedom of thought, and without this freedom, a scientific spirit cannot evolve, without which the capabilities to create and manage material life would be impossible.

The reversal of priorities in the Muslim world makes it all the more essential that the presuppositions of extensibility be examined with a critical eye. The first of these presuppositions is that modernity is inevitable, a claim that assumes modernity to be the practice of the West. The inevitability is

seen as the result of the complexity and pervasiveness of the phenomenon and the lack of control over the evolution and continued development of the forces that drive it. Human beings have no power over it. Its good and bad features must thus be taken together, because they are inextricably connected with each other and because there cannot be good without ensuing negative side effects. Remove the bad and you ineluctably remove the good.

This position, Taha asserts, is plainly defeatist and thus must be rejected. No one imposed modernity on the West, not even God. The West freely willed it and constructed its foundations and institutions. It is nonsensical to argue that the West could raise the modern project but that it now cannot reform or correct it in any way, when it indeed faced and overcame major challenges in building it (*RH*, 55–56). In this pervasive claim, there is a denial of human agency, one that Western culture paradoxically upholds, and that Taha deems powerfully essential to the human qua human.

In this respect, the Islamic method upholds the principle that "human beings are more powerful than modernity," meaning that humans are able to correct any path gone awry and remedy any deficiency to which modernity may have given rise. In fact, should they consolidate their will, human beings can create another, superior modernity altogether, which is to say, Taha is quick to point out, that a new reality (*wāqiʿ*) resulting from a new and truer application (*taṭbīq*) of the principles of modernity's spirit can be constructed. It is revealing here that Taha interpolates the following rhetorical question: "*Why can't human beings even invent a new way of life different from the species of modernity, a way that is outside of its (current) historical phase in human life, moving to a phase that has another name altogether?*"[84] Modernity is neither inevitable nor a predetermined historical reality. And like all other historical eras, it will pass just as it came about. Modernity is therefore ephemeral, but human will is permanent as humans continue to live on the face of the Earth. Humans can will modernity and then will it away, but modernity can never will away human will or humans themselves, the inherent bearers of will.

The fundamental tension in Taha's work lies precisely in the rhetorical positionality of this question. At the deepest levels of his thought, and as the preceding paragraph (if not the entirety of his philosophy) demonstrates most forcefully, there lies an understanding of agency that transcends the nihilism of system's theory and its likes. Yet, this understanding both

complicates and intensifies, rather than resolves, the tensions in his work. If modernity is contingent and clearly the product of Euro-America, and if it will pass away just as it came about, then why should Muslims bother reforming it? This question gains added force if we take into account the multiple problems Taha himself encounters in his adoption of modernity's principles. If critique, as we will see later, must rest on a form of reason that shuns Enlightenment's reason, and indeed considers it a stunted version of what he proposes, then one might say that the entire archeology and structure of modernity's principles will necessarily fall apart in the face of such critique. For Enlightenment reason, as paradigmatically schematized in Kant's philosophy, can in no way be isolated from the governing Kantian principle of *Mündigkeit* or the (non-Kantian yet paradigmatic) conception of universality.[85] That Taha continues to assume modernity while militating against it in the most profound and fundamental ways is perhaps the greatest aporia in his work.

The second presupposition regarding extensibility—namely, that modernity engenders "totalizing power" (*quwwa shāmila*)—is entirely false, because the Western (practice of) modernity, being scientifically and technically quite advanced, has garnered pervasive power for its subjects in the materialistic realm alone. This has engendered another feature, namely, the subjects' quest for more learning and knowledge is inextricably a quest for materialistic control, with the result that they oppressed other societies and denied them the right to move into modernity. All value has become measured by wealth and materiality, morality and ethics having been reduced to self-interest. Self-interest has become blinding, to such an extent that the worldview has revolved around pernicious forms of selfishness. Materialism fares no better, having such dominance over all aspects of life that it has distorted and skewed the application of modernity's spirit. Violence has been substituted for reason, tyranny for democracy, and legitimation of war for the language of dialogue and communication (*RH*, 57n37). The deficit of this crushing materialism is commensurate with excessive spiritual poverty, which has led to various crises exemplified by "the return of the religious," "the return of the irrational," and the like, all of which express a deep desire for the spiritual, a desire that the Western application of modernity could not and cannot fulfill. In Taha's estimation, the situation in the West has become so desperate that Westerners have resorted to the adoption of other

traditional religions, not to mention the countless "religions" they have invented, including cult types that have sometimes integrated even incomprehensible elements of worship, such as group suicide.

VI

It follows from this that another Islamic concept within the purview of extensibility is called for, namely, "human corporeality follows human spirituality" (*RH*, 58). A principle of modernity's spirit, extensibility means that every act or every sphere of activity in modernity must pervade other spheres of human life, which is to say that every human activity must pervade the spirit and soul as much as it pervades body and matter. This inclusion becomes all the more necessary because it is often the case that fulfilling corporeal or material needs hinges on the fulfillment of spiritual needs, since without the soul (*rūḥ*) being cultivated and trained to deal with the material and corporeal aspects of life, there is no guarantee whatever that the individual's behavior will not go awry; and such widespread disorders naturally entail wider disorders in the structure of social and societal relations.

In Taha's vision, then, materialistic modernity must thus be necessarily accompanied by spiritual modernity (*ḥadātha rūḥiyya*), materiality and spirituality being the two pillars on which the entire project rests. Noble values such as dignity, justice, equality, freedom, tolerance, and brotherhood (or *fraternité*) will surely suffer diminution and damage once they are confined to fulfilling material interests alone. Freedom, for instance, cannot be attained only by ridding oneself of external constraints; it is also necessary that internal desires be made to vanish.[86] Likewise, just as justice is put to effect through an external redistribution of wealth, it must also be realized in the distribution and redistribution of internal comprehension (*madārik dākhiliyya*), which is to say that the material redistribution of wealth must rest upon an internal, deeply psychological conviction—pervasive in both the political and the social orders—of the spiritual soundness and necessity of this redistribution (*RH*, 58).[87]

In this spiritualized modernity, the values of the spiritual sphere must be subjected to a "vertical" construction, with their roots planted deep into the psychosocial-cum-psychoepistemic being. In this configuration, these

values are lifted up as paramount pillars, so that they are not blighted as easily as the "horizontal" values have been. To be brought into existence, "vertical values" (*qiyam ʿamūdiyya*) thus require profound reform that is deeply rooted in the sphere of belief (*īmān*), the province of the spiritual (*rūḥī, rūḥānī*). Verticality thus constitutes not only a corrective to the horizontality of the modern subject; it stands as the only alternative to its full and correct realization (*RH*, 15). Here, it is clear, I think, that Taha is arguing that the spiritual and moral should be raised to the rank of what I have elsewhere called a central domain, where a sphere, a system, or a value is, *by rational choice*, enshrined as a paradigmatic field, to which all peripheral domains become or are made to be subordinate.[88] The central domain thus commands the loyalty and productions of the peripheral domains. *Qiyam ʿamūdiyya*, then, stand as paradigmatic and permanent values within a *system* that determines *and subordinates* the *qiyam ufuqiyya*, the vertical values that are by nature ephemeral. Once these paradigmatic values are weakened or destroyed, the system itself will eventually cease to exist.

The third presupposition, namely, that "the essence of modernity is an economic one," in effect means that economics subordinate social relations as well as all other spheres, which, in the language of paradigms, means that economics in Western modernity is paradigmatic, commanding the central domain, whereas other spheres, including the social and the spiritual, are relegated to the peripheral domains. The "hegemonic control" of economics "tightly dominates the entire range of social organization, which has no other concern but economic expansion and unlimited growth in both production and consumption, to such an extent that no power can surpass the power of the market and goods" (*RH*, 59).

The economism[89] of the West has departed from the original spirit of modernity, which takes human dignity to be most central. This sort of economic growth becomes the ultimate end of ends, subordinating human rights—from education and democracy to environment—as mere means to that end. This economism also engenders intense forms of consumerism in the individual and in turn fashions the hedonistic subject. Accordingly, pleasure becomes the measure of all things and acts in the world, leading to well-known adverse behavioral effects. When pleasure becomes the gold standard, all moral restraints lose their anchors.

From all this, the third element of extensibility ensues: "the quiddity of humanity is a moral one."[90] According to this principle, any economic act is

a moral act that elevates the human stature of the actor when properly commissioned, and demotes his stature when omitted. But the economic act must always be situated within a "connected" context, whereby the improvement (or progress) that the subject rightly seeks in human life is limited not to material welfare or mere accumulation of wealth but to all aspects of life, ethical formation being the primary consideration. Moreover, related to this progress are attention to the future and its centrality to the behavior of the individual in the present. Economic progress does not hold the key to progress, because true progress is neither shortsighted nor concerned with immediate gratification. Rather, it lies in the future and the long term, unhandicapped by a myopic vision that constrains vision to the present and the past. The opening of the future as a third major sphere is the work of religion, the fundamental source for integrating the past into present human action, and this, in turn, into the future. Needless to say, Taha's concept of the future as ethical time appears to actively refute the fundamentals of the modern theology of progress.[91]

In sum, the Islamic application of the principle of extensibility is of a moral and therefore profoundly internal character, one meant to ennoble the humanity of human kind.[92] It is not a principle limited to material extensibility, which, if so limited, "would bring the humans down to the level of brutes, a demotion that characterizes the Western application of this principle" (*RH*, 61).

The final consideration is the transformation from an imitative to a creative concept of generalizability, the second aspect of universality. In the sense of "including all human beings," Taha observes, this concept is familiar to Muslims, since Islam, like all religions, calls for its own mission throughout the world, without distinction between peoples or persons, without even knowing who they are. It is to be noted that Taha does not include universalist modern ideologies such as liberalism and Marxism among "religions," perhaps because he does not formally regard them as real religions, despite the fact that he often argues that we should view much of modernity as a secular recasting of old religious concepts.

Be that as it may, Muslims in the age of modernity have misused the notion of generalizability, "because they tied its fate with the issue of defending Islam" (*RH*, 61). Modernity, Taha argues, was erected on the ruins of the Church in Europe, a process associated with a universalizing rejection of all "traditional" religions. Defending Islam *in this context* meant defending

religious irrationality and, consequently, assailing modernity's rationality. Accused of being enemies of reason, "some religious Muslim scholars" (ʿulamāʾ) have, rather defensively, further entrenched themselves in their traditional positions. They have been unable to imagine other responses, choosing defensiveness instead of following "the way of giving," which would permit them to "contribute to the construction of a new modernity for world society" (RH, 62). The modern Islamic misapprehension must, therefore, and nearly at all cost, be erased through a calculated insistence on avoiding the pitfalls of the Western application of the concept of generalizability, which rests on three faulty presuppositions.

The first of these presuppositions is that "modernity consolidates individualist thinking."[93] Scholars are in agreement that modernity produces individualism, in the sense that the individual—as a rational, free, and willing subject—determines her own fate, and shapes her life autonomously, bearing the full responsibility for her own choices and actions. In this conception, living in society is the necessary means for achieving personal happiness and the flourishing of the self. This phenomenon, however, is associated with "Western reality" (read, the Western application) of modernity, and is neither concomitant with nor an integral part of modernity's spirit. Yet, this is not to say that Taha denies free human agency. As we have just seen, he in fact does not. Rather, he insists that while humans can fully shape their own destiny, the positivism of Western modernity has eluded the human quest for man to find his natural place in nature, one that he, as a by-product of positivism, in fact has no mastery over (RH, 88).

According to the true spirit of modernity, the individual is always entitled to his or her rights, freedoms, and dignity. She or he is entitled to participate in the various institutions that manage and decide aspects of one's life as part of the social order. However, none of this means that the individual is given the right to attend to her interests alone, setting aside the collective interests or the interests of individual others. The segregation of the individual as a privileged category in Western practice has led to nothing but selfishness and egocentrism. (In line with the critique I have been advancing, it continues to be unclear in Taha's argumentation how the "application" of both free rational will and, no less, capitalism can be dissociated from the "principles" on which they rest.)

The Islamic concept of generalizability must then take as a point of departure a vision of a "world society," yet one that is different from what the

Western application has produced. This difference is represented in the concept of transitiveness (*taʿaddī*), namely, Muslims must think in terms of making their thinking relevant to and communicatively concerned with others as much as with themselves. True and genuine thinking, Taha affirms, is thinking *with* the other, not just thinking with and for oneself (*RH*, 67). In their affirmations or negations of any matter, they must always consider the immediate and long-term effects, of what they believe and practice, on non-Muslim others. Transitive thinking requires "intellectual inclusivity" (*al-maʿiyya al-fikriyya*), and this is justified by at least three considerations. First, there is no local event in our current world that does not have ramifying effects upon other parts of the world, a fact that demands a universal solution (*ḥalluhu ʿālamiyyan*). Second, the educational fragmentation of various social groups makes it all the more necessary to increase the means and level of communication between and among them. Third, civil society groups have breached all national barriers and so have become just as transnational as international corporations. These groups are capable of meeting the challenges facing the world's population, especially since the modern state has progressively lost its control and power at the international level. Transitive thinking is therefore essential to generalizability and living in today's world.

As for the second presupposition, that "secularism guarantees the sanctity of all religions," it is well known that some have defined Western modernity itself in terms of secularism, characterizing it variously as the "end of church authority," the "end of religion," or "the absence of gods." But all are in agreement that in this particular arrangement secularism is characterized by a separation between political management as a public domain and religious choice as a private affair. However, although this arrangement appears to present secularism as a form of governance that allows free and equal space for religions and their practice, this, it turns out, is not the case at all. The neutrality of the state and its secular apparatus is in fact deceptive because it does not distinguish between good and bad religion, because it views all religions with equal disrespect, if not with outright suspicion and contempt.[94]

Secularism's marginalization of religion poses yet another challenge that religion, especially Islam, must meet, namely, in the "new modernity" Muslims must carefully expose the problematics of secularism's instrumental rationality, and must utilize in the process all the intellectual possibilities

that transitive thinking yields in favor of developing what Taha calls expansive rationality (ʿaqlāniyya muwassaʿa) as a substitute for instrumental rationality (*RH*, 65). This task is performed as much for the benefit of non-Muslims of the world as it is for Muslims themselves, since the ultimate success of an expansive conception of rationality will also depend on gaining the support and cooperation of non-Muslims. There is, after all, a colossal difference between a mind that divines the instrument and one that relegates it to what it in fact is: an instrument. The bridging of this gap is therefore indispensable.

Finally, although Westerners affirm the third presupposition, that "modernity's values are universal values" (*qiyam kawniyya*), they have missed one significant fact, namely, there is a major gap between the ideals they have called for and the realities they have actually created (*RH*, 65). The gap, Taha reminds us, is precisely the difference between what "we have labeled as the spirit of modernity and what we have termed the reality (*wāqiʿ*) of modernity." The West does not seem to understand that the same principles in which it has grounded its modernity can yield other modernities that are distinct from what it has myopically produced. The values of justice, equality, liberty, dignity, and other key concepts are neither particularly Western nor even just global: they are integral, Taha seems to say, to the cosmic order.[95] The Western application, lacking any cosmic dimension, yielded local results that were *coercively imposed* on other nations. Had Westerners meant well, they would have helped these nations find paths to their own, suitable applications of modernity's spirit, so that each nation's or group's modernity would be intrinsic and internal (*dākhiliyya*) to it, suitable for its particular needs and reflective of its own choices (*RH*, 65). Here, we see how Taha, yet again, underrates, even misses, the organic connections and continuities between the "well-intentioned" European civilizing mission and the devastating colonialisms that Europe has visited upon the world.

Thus, the Islamic concept of generalizability recognizes what may be termed "contextual universality,"[96] whereby values invented in one society may be re-created in another, so much so that the second act of re-creation may result in a drastically different product, one that could include elements not found in the first. Contextual universality stands in opposition to "absolutist universality" (*kawniyya iṭlāqiyya*), whereby transplantations are not adapted to suit the particular circumstances and needs of the borrowing society, but rather transposed to others without the possibility of alteration.

The result of absolutist universality would be, of course, stagnation and rigidity. A case in point given by Taha is human rights, which cannot be applied in its Western form to the rest of the world. Even within the West itself, the application of rights varies from one nation or region to another. In Northern Europe, for instance, economic rights are prioritized over other rights, whereas in Eastern Europe, political rights are given higher priority. Furthermore, other parts of the world have added indigenous concepts to the Western register of human rights, such as community and communal rights and "rights of consensus"[97] in Africa.

Islamic Applications of Modernity's Spirit

WE RECALL THAT Taha's second category of the principle of majority is creativity. One form of creativity is what he calls "connective creativity" (*ibdāʿ mawṣūl*), whereby useful and relevant elements of past Islamic traditions are critically admitted into the construction of "Islamic modernity." Although disconnective creativity (*ibdāʿ mafṣūl*) remains necessary for inventing and creating new ideas and practices in the service of an Islamic modernity, its connective counterpart may retain, Taha seems to argue, not only a certain advantage in principle, but also a distinct and substantive one insofar as certain important applications are concerned.

In this chapter, I explore two examples of Islamic application of the principles making up what our philosopher regards as the spirit of modernity. The first of these examples is the principle of majority's connective creativity to the extent that it applies to the important and crucial matter of the Qurʾān and its interpretation for an Islamic modernity. The second, to follow, pertains to globalization. (It should be said that Taha offers four other examples or case studies in illustration of the Islamic application of the principles, namely, the topics of translation, family, citizenship, and "solidarity." However, space does not permit us a meaningful consideration of these. The choice of the themes of the Qurʾān and globalization reflects what I think is their central significance in bringing out important features of Taha's thought, features that represent the measure of their importance in current debates within, and about, Islam.)

I

1. The Imitative Modernists

There are, our writer remarks, various interpretations (*qirāʾāt*, lit. "readings") of the Qurʾān that are claimed by their authors to be modern. None, however, can be truly described as modern because they are not representations of the spirit of modernity but rather an "imitation" (*taqlīd*) of the Western application of this spirit. The Western application is, as we by now know, premised upon a severance of all relationships with the past due to the decadence and abuse associated with it in Europe. Europeans have developed this into a phobia so acute that "they run away from any past, even their own recent past, as if they are running from death" (*RH*, 175).[1] Muslim scholars[2] insist on imitating the West in its negative relationship with the past, despite the fact that the Islamic past was quite different from its European counterpart. The result has been a rupture, whereby current Qurʾānic commentaries, in their attempts to innovate, have lost their ties to earlier ones, by which Taha means the classical *tafsīr* genre and associated others.[3] This severance of ties makes their innovativeness less genuine, since, as he had argued, real forms of creativity must ensue from, and presuppose, connectivity. In the final analysis, severance is a matter of unreflecting imitation of Western ways, not one of "independent *ijtihād*,"[4] leading to illegitimate novelties (*bidaʿ*) that "erase the special characteristics of the Qurʾānic text" (*RH*, 176).

In their purported critical approach to the Qurʾānic verses,[5] the "modernists"[6] (who, henceforth, are referred to unflatteringly as "imitative interpreters") have adopted different strategies, all of which, nonetheless, are reducible to three main elements. The first of these is critique qua critique, namely, critique for its own sake; the second is the procedure or "coordinating mechanism" (*al-āliyya al-tansīqiyya*) through which the desideratum of critique *qua* critique can be attained; and the third is the methodological operations that need to be coordinated to achieve that same end, i.e., critique.

THE STRATEGY OF RECASTING HUMANISM (*KHIṬṬAT AL-TAʾNĪS*)

Since modernist humanism[7] is associated with secularism, Taha argues, its ultimate aim is to remove the sacred (*qudsiyya*) from human life, at least in

the public sphere. Having been considered "sacred speech" for centuries, the Qur'ān has become the target of such a critique, which is to say that the ultimate goal has been to transpose the Qur'ānic text from the domain of the divine—even the "mythological"[8]—to that of the human, this being accomplished through modern critique. The result, scarcely needing emphasis, has been the opening of the text to a system of inquiry that does not recognize the sacred (*RH*, 178–79).

The transformation of the text from the sacred and transcendental to the anthropocentric was performed through various methods, some symbolic, others substantive. At the formal and symbolic level, the conventional exaltations used by the pious (e.g., "the glorious Qur'ān," or "God the exalted said . . .") are dropped in favor of a more secular language. Furthermore, descriptive language has come to replace religious expressions: for example, "Prophetic speech" is used instead of "divine speech," and "the Qur'ānic phenomenon (*al-ẓāhira al-Qur'āniyya*)" in place of "the Qur'ānic revelation." In the same vein, and clearly reflecting anthropocentric changes, not to say bias, the Qur'ānic authority itself has come to be equated with human authority. Accordingly, attestations by Muslim scholars and non-Muslims are posited as equally credible in the critique and analysis of Qur'ānic content. On the whole, the entire language in which these modernist readings are cast signals the transference of the text from a unique and divinely authoritative text into a text "like any other human text" (*RH*, 180).[9]

The effects of this humanistic approach are many, and include the dissociation of the Qur'ānic text from its divine source. It is, we might say on behalf of Taha, an act of stripping the enchanted and rendering it, in proper Weberian terms, a disenchanted part of an equally disenchanted whole. In this transformative and transforming process, the Qur'ān becomes entirely dependent on the "human reader," who is the sole source of meaning, which is to say that the Qur'ānic meaning, like the meaning of any other text, is made by the anthropologically constituted reading community. The only meaning that can be extracted from the text is then what the reader isolates through substantive reference to her specific educational, epistemic, social, and political background, thus limiting the output (*ḥaṣīla*) of interpretation to the immediate, if not exclusively materialistic, human experience and concern, as narrowly defined. This theme of "constraining" and "narrowing down" of psychoepistemic horizons (*taḍyīq*) will gain, as we will see, increasing theoretical importance in Taha's work.[10] Furthermore, and

in an apparent response to Ṭayyib Tīzīnī,[11] the Qur'ānic text, in the process of its transformation to the secular, is rendered incomplete, in that it comes to be seen—e.g., within the secular historical narrative of creating the ʿUthmanic vulgate—as having suffered certain omissions and gaps that the modern exegete needs to fill and complete.[12] Divine speech thus loses its neutrality as an integral text representing a particular authority, and instead it is molded—through a process of human supplementation and complementarity—in ways that permit it entry into the service of one powerful group or another, which obviously cannot mask the further ambition underlying this exercise, which aims to use the Qur'ān to bolster political authority and power.

This last point, pertaining to the imbrication of knowledge (including a humanistically rendered Qur'ānic knowledge) and biopower, is of immense significance, although the economy with which Taha presents the matter appears to gloss over rather than amplify this central problem. One way to tease out the formidable thrust of this point is to think of the constitutional role the Qur'ān played throughout the history of Islam down to the nineteenth century. The considerable autonomy of the Sharīʿa and its system of hermeneutics would not have been possible without arrogating to the juristic-ṣūfī traditions a derivative sense of sovereignty, this effectively amounting to a constitutional status that dominated over political power. Which is to say that Islam's juridico-mystical hermeneutics insisted on a sort of religious humanism rather than a secular humanism. Sovereignty lay not in popular or political will as modernity has come to define it, but rather in an ethico-epistemic concept of sovereignty that always assumed the First Principles of cosmic justice (thoroughly elucidated in the Qur'ān) to possess the highest form of power over life and the way to live it, socially, economically, *and* politically.[13] This explains one of the starkest features of political governance in Islam—that political and military power was largely, if not categorically, confined to the realm of what we today call the executive branch, this bearing yet another constitutionally foundational consequence, namely, political power could not legislate, properly speaking, and because of this juridico-hermeneutical oversight exercised by the Sharīʿa, it was impossible for Islamic political power to develop a concept and practice of what Foucault termed biopower.[14]

There of course exists still another consequence that pertains to the meaning of politics—in its Schmittian as well as Latourian varieties. This

consequence will be addressed in chapter 6, and thus should not detain us here. Ultimately, Taha suggests that a secular humanistic hermeneutics, especially in light of a millennial experience of Islamic constitutionalism, leads unequivocally not only to a robust collusion between knowledge and power, but also to politicizing the Qur'ān in the crudest political sense of the term.

THE STRATEGY OF RATIONALIZATION (*KHIṬṬAT AL-TAʿQĪL*)

Whereas secular humanism seeks to eradicate the sacred, rationalism aims to expunge transcendentalism (*ghaybiyya*),[15] thereby "removing the obstacle represented in the belief that the Qur'ān is a revelation descending from an extrasensory world" (*RH*, 181). The methods employed to defeat this latter vision have included the attack on the premodern Muslim scholar-exegetes who are accused of rigidity and stagnation that allegedly impeded the development of unadulterated rationalism. With this conviction, a certain group "rushed" to assault these traditional scholars. In the footnotes to this discussion, Taha explicitly associates this strategy with Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd and Muhammad Arkoun (*RH*, 181–82nn16–17).

Following the critical philological methodologies developed in Europe to study the biblical texts, these Muslim critics have subjected the Qur'ān to the same treatment, thereby relegating it not only to the status of these humanized religious texts but also to that of profane language. Accordingly, the scholarly principles and critiques in the fields of biblical criticism, comparative religions, history of religion, *Religionswissenschaft*, semiotics, linguistics, and psychoanalysis, among others, have been deployed to dissect the Qur'ān. Critical theories, from discourse analysis and structuralism to deconstruction (fads that come and go with astounding alacrity), have been adopted to study the Qur'ān willy-nilly, without hesitation or comprehension of the implications they carry with them.

The aggregate effects of these approaches have been multiple, ranging from a fundamental change in the very conception of revelation (*waḥy*) to viewing the Qur'ān as lacking in structure or logical sequence. And because symbolism and metaphor are predominant in the Qur'ānic text, scholars have likewise concluded that the mind behind the text is one constructed of legend-narrativity and emotive imaginings, not of inferential logic. The particular historical allusions and references to supposed events or

legendary phenomena are furthermore said to have been relevant for an earlier audience, but now stand unacceptable to the rationally "more advanced" modern audience (*RH*, 184).

Here, again, the consequences of these *modernist* approaches could be teased out more fully by means of deciphering their interconnectedness with the rise of anthropocentrism, their mechanical technique (in the Ellulian sense), and a concept and practice of sovereignty over nature, in this term's widest possible meaning.[16] One could therefore plausibly argue that the implications of a secular humanistic hermeneutic are graver and even more destructive than Taha makes them appear in this particular context.[17] If we accept that secular humanism is indissolubly tied to anthropocentrism and epistemic sovereignty, then secular hermeneutics (of critics like Abū Zayd and his likes) is fundamentally connected with the range of crises that modernity has wrought upon the world in terms of the destruction of ecology, the environment, the social fabric of the community, and much else.[18]

THE STRATEGY OF HISTORY OR HISTORICISM (*KHIṬṬAT AL-TĀRĪKH* OR *AL-ARKHANA*)

The ultimate purpose of this strategy is to dissipate the legal effects of the Qur'ānic verses and to show that the text did not introduce or mean them as fixed and immutable rules. The path generally followed to accomplish this task is to demonstrate the intimate connection between these verses and their own, immediate circumstances. The task is facilitated by the existence of such Islamic fields of inquiry as Asbāb al-Nuzūl (occasions of revelation), Naskh (abrogation), the *muḥkam* and *mutashābah* (equivocal and the univocal), the Meccan and the Medinan categorization, and so forth. The modernists have exploited these discursive fields to the limit, rendering them effective historical tools enlisted in the hermeneutical campaign to locate the Qur'ānic legality within what they see as a foregone and archaic reality. What was relevant at one point of historical time is no longer apposite, an argument that removes any absolutist claim to a modern reading of the text. This historicist location engenders relativist connections between legal norm and historical site, allowing the modernists to engage in the production of ambiguity as to the force and bindingness of legal norms, thereby casting doubt on them as legitimate sources of law (*RH*, 186). This approach is also extended to the so-called rituals (*ʿibādāt*), claimed to have been essential

for minds less rational or critical than those of people today, which is to say that like Qur'ānic *ḥudūd* (fixed penalties for adultery, intoxication, banditry, and the like) and those legal fields pertaining to contractual transactions (*muʿāmalāt*), the "rituals" may now be regarded as both dated and legendary (*usṭūriyya*).[19]

Having adopted a European conceptual framework, the modernist Muslim exegetes (*qurrāʾ*) have endeavored to reduce the legal contents of the Qur'ān into some eighty verses (*RH*, 185–86). Taha does not say more about the roots of this phenomenon, although it makes for a fertile discussion to explore the differences between the European and Islamic conceptions of law, differences that provide tools with which to critique the Islamic modernists' venture.[20] Be that as it may, the modernists' critique is generally intended to accomplish the following: (1) to reduce the overall size of legal content in the Qur'ān, and to subject what may be deemed "legal" to the charges of ambiguity and imprecision that would render much of that content contingent, if not lacking binding effect; nor, on this view, can the Qur'ānic revelation be considered integral or complete, because, had it been so, the traditional jurists would not have complemented it with their own rulings; (2) to relegate Qur'ānic legal injunctions to the status of recommendations and spiritual guidance by depriving them of their binding legal effects as well as of effective regulation of social life and organization; (3) ensuing from the previous consideration, to reduce the Qur'ān to the realm of private conscience, or to "works of the heart" but not actual, legal action; and (4) to relegate the text and the believer's relationship to it to the confines of the private sphere, effectively the ultimate goal of such interpretation (*RH*, 187–88). There is nothing here that stands outside the secular.

2. A Critique of Uncreative Qur'ānic Interpretation

Turning to a critique of what he describes as Islamic strategies of modern Qur'ānic interpretation that merely replicate those adopted by the highly problematic application of Western modernity, Taha wants first to evaluate them in terms of that application itself. The Western insistence on the rupture with the past is an insistence on a particular relationship that the West developed with itself and with its own past. The Islamic modernists have not engaged in any form of creativity, nor have they performed their

hermeneutical task that demands a departure *from within the context of their own history and its conditions*; instead, they have "*reproduced the modern act as it had occurred in another's [i.e., European] history.*"[21] As their strategies reveal, they have imitated the West down to the smallest detail, for the strategies are entirely the product of, if not a reaction to, a particular and local historical experience, one that is European to the core, and bereft of genuine notions of universalism, to boot. The strategies are originally derivative of the struggle the men of the Enlightenment engaged in against the men of the Church, a struggle that intellectually led to the rise of three principles that underlie the "European reality" (= application) of modernity, namely, (1) human endeavor must focus on the human being himself, not on gods and deities, a principle that permitted a winning contest against the spiritual authority of the Church, (2) reason, not revelation, is the means of action, a principle that allowed an assault against the Church's control over education, and (3) attachment to the world, or worldliness, was to replace preoccupation with the eschatological, a principle that undergirded the successful confrontation with the political authority of the Church.[22]

The Islamic modernists' approach to the Qur'ān thus lacks both critical edge and credibility: the methods are deficient as a matter of criticism, and the conclusions are unreliable as a matter of substance. There are at least six methodological deficiencies involved here: First, the inability to engage with critique. The application of a particular method to a particular subject requires justification (lit. legitimation, *mashrūʿiyya*), which itself entirely depends on the test of relevance (*munāsaba*) between the method and the subject or subject matter. Relevance obtains when the method maintains its proper applicability after having been transposed into another context of analysis, whereas the subject preserves its particularity and character after that method has been applied to it. Since the Muslim modernists, insofar as the test of relevance is concerned, have proven themselves unable to critique the methods that they have imported (this critique being a prerequisite for their engagement and participation in modernity), they should not have engaged in this exercise in the first place, before they have successfully cultivated that skill of critique (*RH*, 190).

Second, the modernists clearly lack command over the theories and critical methods they have imported, and have only a shaky understanding of the foundations and methodological-theoretical layers upon which these theories and methods rest, hence the frequent confusions in their writings

with regard to certain concepts and issues. The modernist Muslim interpreters have not been careful enough even in the range of their borrowings, having indiscriminately latched on to half-baked theories and ideas, many of them dated. These ideas and theories are not deemed complete or adequate even in their own original European contexts, and remain, as they are, under continuous scrutiny and driven by the precariousness of trial and error. In other words, the modernists have often adopted shoddy and flimsy sets of ideas instead of "solid scientific[23] accomplishments."

Third, thinking that the theories and forms of analysis they have imported from the West are invincible and superior, they condemned many of their fellow Muslims as "backward," "traditional," "conventional," and "rigid." When they have discovered that these theories and modes of analyses have lost currency and have become nearly discredited, they have failed to reconsider their own ways of thinking, and have continued with their condemnation of, and supremacist attitudes to, the tradition. They certainly cannot be accused of entertaining self-doubt, which is why they would ride the next wagon of theories and continue to level the same critical charges without examining the inner structures of these theories and the indigenous historical contexts in which they were constructed. Upon scrutiny, their arguments are easily shown to be an uncreative reiteration of the findings of either Western scholars or classical Muslim thinkers; and when this is not the case, theirs is a product inferior to both (*RH*, 191).

Fourth, in their critique of the Qur'ān, they have rather arbitrarily determined the weight to be allocated to the various voices of authority within the classical tradition of Qur'ānic studies, elevating certain authorities and demoting others at will. Doctrines and ideas that were deemed mainstream and authoritative are now set aside, mostly without supporting arguments, while those that represented minority or weak views are now elevated to supreme positions (*RH*, 191).[24]

Fifth, they have let loose their critical method of doubt, not only subjecting the text to unrelenting analysis, but also casting, in the process, much doubt on the overall utility of the Qur'ān itself, not to speak of its sacred and integral character. A serious examination of their generalized methods of doubt inevitably leads to the conclusion that their so-called discoveries are related to the world of phenomena (*ẓawāhir*), not to that of values (*qiyam*). But to attain a knowledge of reality—here erroneously equated with values—doubt and skepticism would be useless. To the contrary, faith and certainty

lead to true knowledge of value, and the more certain the believer is, the more intense the value appears to her, and vice versa. Taha here appears to be drawing on Kant's categories of *phenomena* and *noumena*, assigning to the latter the Arabic term *qiyam* (lit. values).[25]

All this shows, Taha argues, that the Muslim "modernists" who took up the study of the Qur'ān belong not to modernity but rather to premodernity, because in their very imitation of the modern they have assigned themselves the status of wards (*taḥta al-wiṣāya*)—a state of utter dependence on the will of another, which is another way of saying that this state is the opposite of the core principle of majority, the Kantian propeller to modernity's Enlightenment.[26]

If it is granted that no modernity can be attained without majority and creativity, then the crucial question, according to Taha, becomes "How do we attain a creative interpretation of the Qur'ān?"

3. Creative Modern Interpretation

Taha insists that it is necessary to discuss two historical facts before proceeding. First, it must be posited that the Qur'ān is the raison d'être of the Islamic *umma*, squarely standing behind the role this *umma* played in world history. The first act of "reading" (or interpreting) the Qur'ān was the Prophetic Act, which amounts to the "first modern act (*al-fiʿl al-ḥadāthī al-awwal*), if we are permitted this expression" (*RH*, 193). In his narrative, if Muslims are to continue to play their role in history and to contribute to it, they have to commit the second modern act, which presupposes and requires a new reading that re-establishes the Qur'ān's connections and ties with the first Prophetic Act. The challenge of creativity now, Taha asserts, is as serious as that faced during the age of the "Muḥammadan reading" (*al-qirā'a al-Muḥammadiyya*).

The second fact is that which we have repeatedly mentioned, namely, the imposition of Church authority and power over Europe and the attendant reactions to it—all of which led to the European venture of "freeing the minds" and to proceeding with a history devoid of the evils of religious wars (*RH*, 194).

These two historical facts reveal the oppositions between the Western and Islamic modernities, oppositions dictated by two different historical

experiences. Whereas the West's creativity rested on severing ties with Europe's own past by way of the struggle against religious domination (altogether leading to dissociative innovation, *ibdāʿ mafṣūl*), Islamic creativity did not, and does not, derive its inspiration from a similar struggle, but rather from an interaction (*tafāʿul*) between the modern and the religious.[27] This latter phenomenon makes for an associative and continuity-based creativity (*ibdāʿ mawṣūl*). And it is precisely here where the Islamic modernists have committed their most egregious error. They have woven the doctrine of the irreconcilability of modernity and religion into their thinking, thereby blindly imitating the West, when their culture and historical legacy do not require the same kind of creative response that Europe's history called for.

Accordingly, a truly creative interpretation of the Qur'ān presupposes two conditions: first, the rationalization of religious interaction (*tafāʿul dīnī*) between the Text and the world; and second, the renewal of the modern act, or reenacting modernity according to the principles of its spirit. The relationship between the two conditions is dialectical, since one feeds on the other. Creativity engenders rationalization, and rationalization is the vehicle of creativity. This dialectic or, if you will, marriage between the two is found in each of the strategies of modern interpretation of the connective type (*mawṣūl*).

THE STRATEGY OF CREATIVE HUMANISM (*KHIṬṬAT AL-TA'NĪS AL-MUBDIʿA*)

This strategy does not aim to abolish the sacred as traditional, uncreative secular humanism does; rather, its ultimate goal is to honor human kind. Yet, this sort of honoring requires that sacredness be removed from the human domain, beginning with the sanctification of the individual human or of the self. The chief characteristic of this strategy is thus the transference of Qur'ānic verses from their divine condition to a human condition, this being an act of honoring human kind, without bestowing on it a status of either sanctification, sovereignty, or divinity. The mechanics of this transference do not involve or cause the weakening of religious interaction, for the Qur'ān itself acknowledges that it was revealed in the language of the Arab people (lit. "Arab human beings," *al-insān al-ʿArabī*) and in accordance with the discursive conventions of this language, although the audience

targeted by that language is human kind in its entirety. The occurrence of this revelation in that particular context represents a concrete manifestation of the transference of a divine speech into a human context or condition. An unconditioned and unrestricted divine message becomes delimited by its humanization, so to speak. Note here that, unlike in Jābrī, the concept of "Arab" in Taha is largely linguistic and cultural, but not national or even ethnic.

Nor does this procedural transference infringe upon the modern act, since man restores his own importance not by commandeering divine authority (as conventional secular humanism has done) but by consenting to divine will (*muwāfaqat irādat al-Ilāh*). It is axiomatic that any consideration corresponding to divine will is better than that which does not, since correspondence signifies divine insurance and a guarantee of continuity and completion. Nor is this all. God does not merely want man to run his own life affairs; he also wants to make him his deputy (*khalīfa*) in the management of this world (*RH*, 198). With this most distinguished ennoblement of man—which involves raising him to a level next only to God[28]—comes the essential requirement, or perhaps attendant phenomenon, of the connectivity between man and his creator. Yet this connectivity is weightily charged with the burden of stewardship that demands the duty and binding obligation of responsibility and accountability.[29] Humanism must thus be grounded in this connectivity, for severing the latter while simultaneously elevating man to the rank of divinity is impossible. In short, creative humanism bestows on humankind values that venerate them in ways superior to those provided by conventional, secular humanism. It is a form of humanism that is capable of pervading and permeating modernity more auspiciously and even more intensely than conventional humanism ever could.

The contrasts and differences between these two forms of humanism compel the conclusion that the Qur'ānic text does not stand on a par with texts of human authorship, which is exactly what conventional, secular humanism has done with it. The issue, as Taha might have put it, is thus not just metaphysical; it goes to the core of the concept of sovereignty and its sources of authority. The debate over the Qur'ānic text cannot be understood on terms of Kantian rational autonomy, for the implications are much greater than this autonomy and secularism make the issue to be. To decide on the matter of textual sacredness or profaneness is, I take Taha to be saying, a

matter of deciding how much epistemic sovereignty human beings are entitled to enjoy.

Human texts are forms of expression, *ashkāl taʿbīriyya*, which I take to be means of communicating semiotic signs and symbols between and among people. The Qurʾānic text, on the other hand, represents communicated substances (*maḍāmīn tablīghiyya*), that is, unidirectional communication of instructional content. Standing at the top of these substances is the doctrinal substance (*al-maḍmūn al-ʿiqadī*),[30] a self-renewing source of enlightening guidance (*RH*, 199). Unlike common human speech or text, this communicative substance is capable of providing for changing forms of modern experience, because it derives from the most abstract meaning of divine unity. Being extendable to all forms of life temporally and spatially, this meaning is unsurpassable in its "linguistic modernism" (*RH*, 199). It is capable of reinventing itself at every turn, thus fulfilling the essential modern requirement of creativity.

The foregoing paragraph arguably represents language somewhat simplistically. Human texts are not just semiotic signs or merely symbols through which individuals and groups establish a particular mode of communication. Rather, "secular" language, the site of the intersections between power and knowledge, is largely performative and constitutive of subjects. I think Taha would agree with this characterization. Yet, he seems to argue that language in the secular mode transmits and foregrounds these relationships of power, but does not provide the subject with ethical instruction of the type he is advocating. Qurʾānic language is precisely the matrix that continuously reminds (*dhikr, tadhkīr*) the believer of the presence of first-order ethical principles, something that secular language is inherently incapable of providing. Constitutive secular language/text intrinsically engenders power relationships, whereas divine language constitutes moral instruction and effects ethical subject-formation.

THE STRATEGY OF CREATIVE RATIONALIZATION (*KHIṬṬAT AL-TAʿQĪL AL-MUBDIʿA*)

Unlike the strategy of conventional rationalization, in creative rationalization there is no intention to eradicate the transcendental. Yet, the aim of this strategy is to widen the scope of reason by eliminating superfluous and

misplaced forms of metaphysics. This strategy may be best defined as dealing with Qur'ānic verses through all possible ways of thinking and reflection that modern critical theories afford, with the view of expanding the purview of reason (*tawsīʿan li-niṭāq al-ʿaql*). This expansion, as we will see in chapter 4, involves what Taha calls enhanced reason.

It must be emphasized that for Taha "religious interaction" with the Qur'ānic verses is not weakened by having recourse to the widest range of modern theories, for this interaction avoids the approach of reduction, omission, and suppression (*uslūb al-isqāṭ*) adopted by the conventional school, whose advocates in the Arab world he has already named. The methodology of using such theories is different, in that it substitutes instrumental reason and relativism with a semiotic reason consisting of signs and values. Nor does "scientific" reason violate the "modern act," because it is able to recover its enlightened self by means of realizing the world of human values. It is also able to transform the modern act from one of pure materialism and instrumentalism to the indispensable dualism of the material-cum-moral, this alternative approach being an attempt at saving the Western modern act from its errors, or perhaps even from itself. Furthermore, this approach will lead to connective creativity, for it does not take it upon itself to dissociate the extrasensory from the Qur'ānic text, as the conventional school has done. Rather, in the very dialectical process of Qur'ānic interpretation, it builds into its modus operandi and modus vivendi the means to expand reason's horizons, essentially liberating it of its instrumentalism. This liberation is an *indispensable condition* for a proper comprehension and appreciation of the values upon which the edifice of human existence is built.

It is therefore clear, Taha explains, that the preoccupation with reason in this strategy is more intense than one may find in any of the conventional strategies. The latter is in fact preoccupied with avoidance, that is, avoidance of the transcendental and the metaphysical, misconceived as detrimental to reason and rational thinking. But reason as represented in Taha's creative strategy does not seem to stand autonomously, as an external methodological apparatus working upon a subject, whatever that subject may be. Instead, this expansive reason *excavates* the sources of rationality and its many forms *within* the Qur'ānic text itself. Which is to say that through reason the Qur'ān can be mined in order to enhance and bolster the depth and range of reason itself. This allows our philosopher to speak of the

"Qur'ānic mind" (*al-ʿaql al-Qur'ānī*) that is able not only to make sense of phenomena and noumena, and even of events and moral instruction (*RH*, 201), but also to connect them as complementary and dialectical pairs. Here the Kantian dualism of phenomena and noumena is dissolved, for every Is is an indication of and suggestive of an Ought. The expansive reason of creative strategy seems to acquire an advantage here, precisely where the Is was arbitrarily fixed in the Western application as incapable of yielding the Ought.[31]

Invoking a premodern conception of reason, Taha recovers the *qalb* (lit. heart) as the locus not only of reason, but also of all sources of human apprehension, including the complex and intricate ways they overlap, dialectically interact, and complement one another.[32] *Qalb*, in other words, represents an all-inclusive faculty encompassing the intellective, sensory-perceptual, emotional, and spiritual realms of comprehension,[33] whereby sensory perception and the intellectual and spiritual realms interconnect.

The Qur'ānic repertoire of *qalb* allows Taha to argue that the epistemological range of comprehending reality in this text is far wider, deeper, and richer than anything that an instrumental or materialist intellect could offer.[34] These latter, lagging not far behind paganism, are in their very nature narrow and simple-minded when compared with the piercing intellectualism and spiritualism of divine unity. The analogy that the conformist modernists have made between the Qur'ān and humanly authored texts is therefore fallacious.

STRATEGY OF CREATIVE HISTORY
(*KHIṬṬAT AL-TĀRĪKH AL-MUBDIʿ*)

This strategy is represented as "connecting Qur'ānic verses to their various circumstances, environment, time and contexts [in which they were revealed, with the purpose of] anchoring morality on firm footing." In a footnote at the end of this sentence, Taha remarks that "some conformist modernists have noticed the importance of morality in the Qur'ān, and so [unable to dismiss it] they relegated it to a sphere of values that remained unbinding; this is in addition to separating these values from legal principles" (*RH*, 202n46).

The approach of connecting the Qur'ānic verses to their original context "does not weaken religious interaction in any way," because these contexts represent "the first and most idealistic realization of values and aims that

these verses embody." With the changes of circumstances and contexts in later eras and periods, these values and aims are realized anew in those changing times, for the values are upheld by the very fact of this renewed realization. Nor does this connectivity harm the modern act in any way. The "governmentality" predicated on this connectivity is not cast aside or shunned—which is how the conventional moderns have treated it. Rather, "governmentality" progressively gains in refinement so as to rise above the mere regulation of external behavior, thereby ethicizing behavior internally, in the deepest layers of the soul. This, Foucault might have said, is a technology of the self at its most demanding level of operation.[35]

The Qur'ānic ethicization of conduct thus operates at both the legal and the moral levels, but it must be clear that the legal always follows and is thus subordinate to the moral. Law, regulations, and rules are therefore only as good as the morality that gives rise to them. This is to be understood as part of the principle (often misunderstood) that ethics and moral instruction in Islam are not optional, to be followed or ignored at will; rather, they are necessities (ḍarūrāt) whose violation or neglect comes at the price of infringing upon social organization as well as upon the very value of humanity intrinsic to the human. In Taha, it is not the law that governs but rather ethics. If the highest regulative mechanism in the modern state is the law, then the commanding regulative technology in Islam is the ethical and the moral. Under this rubric, law becomes nothing more than the technical elaboration of ethics.

Being the first goal of Islam, even its raison d'être,[36] the anchoring of conduct in morality and ethical value demands our first and foremost attention, hence Taha's insistence on the crucial need for connective creativity. The conformist modernists in Islam mistakenly thought that this connectivity is harmful, since it means that one is bound by regulations and rules as pertain to such matters as slavery and the treatment of non-Muslims. But such rules, adopted by some modern Muslim states, are both "rash" and "rigid."[37]

The strategy of creative history is thus more amenable to modernity and its true principles than its conformist counterpart. Nor does this strategy confine its imagination to a fixed and concrete view of historical events, rules, or narrative. Moral instruction derives its value from moral intent. Here, Taha seems to suggest that moral conduct is determined by moral will, one that seeks to find moral content in every thing it sees. Thus, whatever

historical narrative the Qur'ān may cite, it is not about history in the narrow, linear, and factual modern sense, but rather about what that event means, within ethical time, as an interpretive arena of the moral. The Qur'ān is not intended to teach us history in the Western sense of historical narrative and historiography, but instead to accomplish specific ethical aims and realize certain values. The events it describes are not just events narrowly conceived. Perhaps at the end of the day, they are not events at all, but ethical signposts of a semiotic variety meant to guide and correct human conduct.[38]

In the necessary quest to forge "the history of the future" out of the Qur'ān, Muslims must experience the text, Taha writes, as current, as always situated in the ever-continuous nowness (*rāhiniyya dā'ima*) of life. Since the text's whole purpose is the promotion of high moral and spiritual values, the passing of time cannot affect that purpose as it does actual historical events. The passing of time might render past events irrelevant, but supreme ethical values shape time, since it is these values that determine how history is made, even how it is read. The will to these values *makes* history, which explains why the Qur'ānic text is "unmatched" in "its historical modernism."[39]

II

Given that the applications of modernity are many, just as it is given that social customs and ways of life are no less varied, one may compare between and among all these versions of reality and prefer one over another. This is Taha's entry point to the challenging position that Islamic modernity, by the very logic of the principle of critique inherent in modernity's spirit, has the right to exercise its own critical faculty upon the Western application of this spirit.

It will be recalled that the principle of critique encompasses two elements, rationalization (*ta'qīl*) and differentiation (*tafṣīl*). The Western application of the former has led to the creation of instrumental reason, a narrow way (*muḍayyaq*) of thinking about the world. Likewise, the Western application of differentiation has yielded deep and absolute structural separations, whereas the Islamic application resorts to differentiation as a merely functional practice that will dissolve itself once the aim of that differentiation has been achieved.[40]

What is most remarkable about the Western applications in these spheres is that they almost never fail to achieve results contrary and oppositional to their initial aims. Taha does not care to elaborate on whether these initial aims are intended or merely declared, because his interest does not lie in dissecting and understanding the Western application for its own sake. Understanding of this application seems necessary only insofar as it is relevant for advancing both the Islamic critique and the blueprint of Islamic application. What is important in this context is the result, and the result is that globalization, instead of accomplishing its original purpose of "bringing all human societies together," produced national, ethnic, and religious divisions and strife, with intolerably destructive results (*RH*, 75). A "by-product of the Western application of modernity," globalization "has violated fundamental moral principles, thus plaguing itself with abhorrent practical and transactional shortcomings" (*RH*, 77). Taha squarely identifies instrumental reason as the immediate and direct cause of these behavioral defects.

Expansive rationalization (being reason entwined with the ethical)[41] represents the main Islamic approach to globalization, which has hitherto rested in its development on instrumental reason. Expansive rationalization permits ample space for moral values, be they theoretical, practical, or affective. These values are deemed the necessary guiding spirit and directives of instrumental reason, capable of curbing its excesses and limiting its oppressiveness.

Aware of the complexity of the phenomenon of globalization, Taha attempts to provide a workable definition of the concept. It represents, he explains, "a rationalization of the world in a way that transforms it into a single domain of relations between and among societies and individuals, by means of exercising control in three areas: control of economy in the sphere of development, control of technique (technology) in the sphere of knowledge, and control of the World Wide Web in the sphere of communication" (*RH*, 78).

Globalization is then neither a state nor a condition innate to the world, but a constructed act that affects the world in its entirety. It is an extensive and expansive rationalizing act that continues to operate on the world as its object. Which is also to say that it is a continuous and never-completed act that strives, through the three areas of control, to re-create the world as a single social, economic, cultural, and political unit. It is therefore

necessary, Taha continues, to understand not only the modus operandi of these three forces and the nature of the relations they create, but also the effects of these relations, in terms of morality and ethics, on the character of the players in the system.

First, economics. While it is taken for granted that economics are essential to development and growth, it is not fully appreciated that globalization's distinguishing act of rationalization seeks to clothe each and every sort of development with the mantle of capitalist economics. Most people believe that recruitment into the free market is the ticket to entering the theater of economic control. But how is this possible?

Ever since modern globalization began to expand, it has advocated a vision of itself as being beneficial and good in both means and ends. It has propounded the conception that economic growth is the best and ultimate form of growth, a form that can bring progress to all the world's peoples alike. This was explained in terms of opening up opportunities, creating jobs, and solving socioeconomic problems. It was presented to the world as operating by a "natural" logic where, by virtue of an invisible hand, wealth trickles down to all classes, making everyone better off than before. The more wealthy the rich become, the better off the poor become in tandem. It is in accordance with this logic and worldview that the gigantic transnational corporations were set loose in the world, to trade and invest where and as they like, without interference from national or sovereign entities. Over time, their power has been further consolidated through the establishment of such organizations as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization.

The logic of globalization is thus materialist, seeking to increase, without boundary or limit, material wealth *for the sake of wealth*. There is no limit to competition, just as there is no limit to profit, sacrificing along the way every other interest, whether social, civil, or otherwise. The corporations never hesitate to militate against any legal restrictions of the national state, often resorting to illegal activities such as bribes and pressure (if not to outright criminal means).[42] More importantly, they have done their best to propagate materialist values in all societies of the world, and diminish any values that interfere in the logic of the free market and consumerism. The results have been devastating, and include the spread of violence, corruption, drugs, perversion, and overall declines in communal solidarity (*RH*, 80). (Note here the disjunction Taha perceives between the multinational

corporations and the state, where the former appear as renegades against the latter's normative law. It is eminently arguable, however, that both, notwithstanding competition, are different organs of the same larger project of domination, one driven by a single structure of thought.)[43]

In this new system, there is no truly substantive place for ethical values and moral considerations, for these always seem to contradict the spirit and practice of capitalist globalization. Such values rest on the all-important Weltanschauung of sanctification (*tazkiya* = purification) that creates a distinction between benefit (*manfaʿa*) and interest (*maṣlaḥa*). All benefits are interests, but not all interests are benefits. Benefits reflect moral values and ethical practice, but interests may include materialistic greed and selfish behavior.[44] In both their modus operandi and modus vivendi, the "globalizers" engage with interests, not benefits.[45] Their interests grow and multiply, but their "benefits" are nearly nonexistent; the growth they generate is stupendous, but the "sanctification" of the wealth they embody is virtually absent. They have come to worship economics as if it is a god who ceaselessly bestows his bounties upon them. They are thoroughly preoccupied with accumulating wealth, but have neglected to nurture their moral character. Sanctification is therefore the means by which interests *are made* to conduce to the shaping of human well-being, this being measured in moral, not materialistic, terms.

Second, technique. Technicalism, technology, and, in sum, technique[46] are the applied manifestations of science and knowledge. As the result and consequence of knowledge, they are predicated upon it, and must thus be subordinate to it. Yet, given the context of the rationalizing regime of globalization, this conventional understanding of the relationship between the two is no longer acceptable, for at least two reasons. First, the two overlap so extensively that technique seems to subordinate knowledge and furthermore define it in terms of consumerist needs that are determined by the corporate and international market. Knowledge has thus become a tool and a means of technique, which dictates, through its own logic and modes of operation, its trajectories and teleology. Second, knowledge of technique has expanded its purview and has thus come to encompass the study of industry, society, and culture in which it finds unending applications. It has forged extensive relationships between technical progress and the development of social structures as these interact with their natural environments. Which is to say that technical knowledge has infiltrated the domain of theoretical

knowledge, seriously affecting it and adversely determining its path. This structural infiltration of technique has led, for instance, to the unprecedented acceleration of inventions and discoveries across the board, to such an extent that some of these "advances" have come to constitute new major threats to humanity and its future existence.

The effect of all this is that technoscience has come to generate technical, computational, and experimental relations among human beings, with the effect that its project of rationalizing relations in the globalized scene amounts to casting these relations not as sets of praxis (ʿamal) but as procedures. Procedure, needless to say, is an external, mechanical act, one that conforms to the appearance of things.[47] This is to be contrasted with praxis, an inner, embodied, deeply psychological, if not psychoepistemic, mode of behavior that is generated by a nonmaterial value. This is not to say that the "globalizers" do not engage in sanctification. They do. But their sanctification or even undivided worship of technoscience is limited and confined in scope, reflecting a narrow conception of ethics and rationalization. The problem that calls for a solution then is a systemic and profound neglect of praxis, which, for Taha, is always ethical embodiment and moral formation of the soul (*RH*, 82).

Third, telecommunication. A close look at the relations created by globalized communications reveals that the participants in this system are anything but members of a "single global village," an expression that is at times used to insinuate the creation, through the World Wide Web, of intimately close and meaningful relationships between and among these participants. For information, which is all the net is able to convey, is incapable of creating truly meaningful personal connections (*maʿrūfāt*), which continue to stand in contrast with, if not in opposition to, information (*maʿlūmāt*). The legacy of this communication system is thus the sanctification of superficial relationships that rest on the ennoblement of information to a godly rank (*RH*, 83).

The three areas of control have therefore given rise to a "triadic moral problem" that calls for a solution. The question that "faces us now" then is "What is the solution?" Note that this approach, as articulated here in pithy language, paradigmatically captures Taha's philosophical orientation. Paradigmatically, because his interrogation is not concerned with "What is happening now?" with with "Who are we now?"—a philosophical location in which both Kant and Foucault placed themselves. Foucault found Kant's

manifesto "What Is Enlightenment?" striking because Kant essentially asked the philosophically important questions "What's going on just now? What is happening to us? What is this world, this period, this precise moment in which we are living?" More effectively put, Kant asked the fundamental question " 'What are we,' now"? Foucault's appreciation of the innovative nature of Kant's question rested on his own interest and preoccupation with the modalities and dynamics of modern power "at present" (a specification that abounds in his work). The target "nowadays," he argued,

> is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political "double bind," which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures. The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries.[48]

Yet, on balance, Foucault's project did not involve such a "promotion," for it was a project of diagnostics, from beginning to end. The project, put differently, continued to labor, however brilliantly, under the weight of the question "What are we, at present?" And it is precisely here where the difference between his project and Taha's lies. The latter departs from the Kantian/Foucauldian question, taking its answer for granted. Instead, his question is "What can we become, and how?"

It is true, Taha argues, that the severity of the moral crises in the West has engendered reactions that took on various shapes and guises. Among these is the phenomenon of establishing new academic programs to teach ethics and investigate ethical problems in a rapidly changing world. It seems that ethics committees have been established everywhere and in every field, and that new conventions, regulations, and by-laws on ethics have been drafted by state agencies as well as by human rights organizations and many others. Unprecedented discourses on ethics have been emerging with vigor, dealing with an array of spheres, and labeled variously as "bioethics," "environmental ethics," "communication ethics," "labor ethics,"

"administrative ethics," and so forth. There has also been a dramatic increase in talk about the need for people to bear ethical responsibility for the whole range of life's activities, including the challenges of environmental pollution, the ceaseless distensions of *technique*, social and communal disintegration, political corruption, misinformation, and the like.

Despite all these "developments," crises in morality and ethics are on the rise, and people "everywhere are complaining about their [own] conditions." But all this "goes back to the new technological-communicative-economic system being structurally and rationally so persistent that it can withstand all these ethical requirements and needs, and furthermore harnessing them to serve its own interests and to perpetuate its own eternal law, namely, the endless quest to create wealth" (*RH*, 85). The situation thus remains that business and money-making subordinate morality and ethics, not the other way around. Which is to say, Taha wants to argue, that modern economics, technique, and communications allow for minor concessions in favor of ethical corrections as means of appeasement that fortify and enhance, rather than really reform, the current system. What must also be understood is that a true solution to such a situation will never come from the agents who are responsible for this situation. Which is also to say, Taha insists, that it is extremely naïve to think that the system in its present power-base configuration can fix itself. Any qualitative and significant change must come from the outside, since the "system cannot emit any ethical values other than what it can produce itself" (*RH*, 86, 97).

The solution to the moral crises of the modern world must thus fulfill three conditions: (1) it must come from outside the centers of power on which the modern system rests; otherwise, the system will subordinate it to its own imperatives, just as it routinely does in the case of countless institutes, conventions, and organizations that promote ethical content; (2) for obvious reasons, it must derive from sources superior to, and stronger than, the sources of the current system; and (3) it must rest on universal ethics so that it corresponds to the massive range of globalization and still meets its requirement of "founding a single universal society." And so "we need not contemplate the matter long before we realize that there is no authority that can fulfill these conditions except religious authority (*sulṭat al-dīn*). Revealed religion is the only thing left that this system did not produce; indeed, religion produced some of this system's features, but these have come to be

distorted. . . . Finally, religion alone was revealed for all people (without distinction) and it called for the unification of groups/peoples/nations (*aqwām*, *umam*) and gave many of them a single culture."[49]

Evidence of this need for revealed religion is the rise everywhere of movements that demand the return to religion as a response to the crises of modernity, by which Taha nearly always means the Western application of modernity's spirit.[50] If this is the case, he writes, then we ought to ask: Should every people/nation/group (*qawm*) return to its forefathers' religion, extracting from it moral principles to fight off the evils of globalization? Or should the learned leaders of *all* these groups/nations/peoples meet and discuss how they can deduce from their religions some principles they *all* agree on, this being the sum total and common denominator of a body of ethics and morality that they will deploy in order to avert the harmful effects of globalization (akin to what some have labeled as "interfaith dialogue")?[51]

Taha's answer is this: In the event that peoples/nations/groups decide to work out their problems separately, the multiplicity of their moral systems will obviously cause their dialogues to fail, due to their lack of unity in the face of the vast and well-integrated system of globalization. But even if we assume, he says, that a common denominator can be found, that denominator will perforce be minimal (*qadr adnā*), since everyone has to agree to it, with the consequence that this weak agreement will not be sufficient to dislodge the forceful presence of the current globalization system. Therefore, another alternative must be sought, that is, another system that can afford a maximal moral content (*qadr aʿlā*) capable of providing the means to prevail over the current form of globalization. This alternative system is "the religion of Islam, and the evidence in favor of this proposition we shall call 'the evidence of moral time.' "[52]

Divine laws (*sharāʾiʿ ilāhiyya*) are concurrent with the beginnings of human time. It is known as well, Taha explains, that humans have successively been commanded to abide by these laws with a view to "ordering their social behavior and to realizing their cultural existence."[53] The Islamic religion, having come at a fairly late period in the human history of revelation, is the best equipped in terms of the moral and ethical arsenal because it gathers within itself the cumulative moral legacy of all that has come before it. Being the latest arrival among the major religions of the world, its efficacy and therefore applicability remain in effect even in the present age of

globalization. The authority acquired by Islam here is one of a cumulative historical effect, made by Taha to resemble a deterministic outlook. The implication of casting the matter thus is for Taha to argue that "globalization as a cultural act" occurs *within* the moral temporality of Islam. And as such, Islam, like it or not, "is responsible for what is happening during its own time."[54] "We are therefore permitted to say that globalization is an Islamic reality (*ḥaqīqa Islāmiyya*), although it was not created by Muslims themselves, but rather by others" (*RH*, 88).

To say that globalization is an Islamic reality amounts to saying that modernity is an Islamic reality as well, and both of these claims, Taha is fully aware, may trigger "bewilderment and astonishment." This reaction is due to the confusion between "moral time" and "historical time"—the latter being the time in which events in the human past took place. Events are unique. They cannot be repeated or reenacted. Responsibility for these events thus falls upon those who committed them and no one else. On the other hand, moral time is one of values, not events, which is to say that values are not historical acts or events with a beginning and an end, but are renewable and even replicable, as evidenced in their reiteration in the sequences of many major religions. And here is the crucial point: responsibility (and I take Taha's meaning to be ethical responsibility) falls upon the adherents of that "religion in time," that is, upon the faithful who inhabit moral temporality (*RH*, 89). It therefore follows that "every contemporary Muslim individual is responsible for globalization, though historically he may not be its creator; for moral time belongs to his own age, not to the age of others" (*RH*, 89). Owning up to the present age thus comes with a great deal of responsibility. The Muslim individual (a term left undefined) is charged with the grave responsibility of "tracking the phenomena associated with globalization," and "examining their moral contents," with a view to deciphering the ethical elements and distinguishing them from those that are amoral or immoral. Obviously, the task is to promote and enhance the existing ethical elements, convert the amoral to the moral, and resist and change immoral conduct.

Having argued that "Islam is the religion that possesses the legitimacy and capability to avert the moral shortcomings of globalization," Taha proposes to elucidate the general principles that govern *how* staving off these defects may be possible. To begin with, the matter of defining the term *globe* (*ʿālam* = world, hence *ʿawlama*) calls for attention. As used by the

"globalizers," "globe" is ill defined. "It is not, as they imagine, a single field of relations with the semantic meaning of (the term) *relations* being set in an absolute framework (*iṭlāq*). Rather, it is a single field of relations qualified by ethics (*akhlāq*). Which is to say that the *globe/world* is an ethical relational field."[55] This position is foregrounded in the thesis—elaborated, as we have seen, in the introductory parts of *Rūḥ al-Ḥadātha*—that since the essence of humanity is constituted of ethics, and since, therefore, the acts of human beings are, in their neutral state (*ṣarīḥ*),[56] moral, it is necessary for these acts to be directed toward others as human beings, which means that the other must always be assumed to be equally constituted of ethical fiber. These definitional-conceptual boundaries entail a situation in which each and every individual falls under moral duties toward others, just as these others owe that individual the same measure of moral conduct. The ethical nature of human beings therefore makes individual humans (just as it makes groups, large or small) ethically responsible toward the world in its entirety. This is so because ethics is woven into the constitution of the world, and extricating ourselves from this fiber is to run against our own nature. Thus all of us are responsible, and to limit that responsibility "to a particular society, group, or family" is out of the question (*RH*, 90).

Now that Islam's burden of ethical responsibility is taken for granted, the task of rerationalizing globalization must be thought through a number of principles, the first of which is the principle of seeking moral surplus (*ibtighā' al-faḍl*).[57] As previously mentioned, the current practice of globalization has been preoccupied with economic growth (*tanmiya*) and has overlooked the principle of sanctification (*tazkiya*). The principle of seeking moral surplus finds realization when "there is complementarity of the economic factor, including that of growth, *and* the maintenance of a constant connection with the spiritual horizons" (*RH*, 90). The Arabic term *faḍl* happens to be an accurate expression of the principle's content, for it means two things: (1) as derivative of *faḍīla* (virtue), it expresses acts across the spectrum of life that are characterized as virtuous; and (2) as associated with *khayr* (goodness), it represents a good act or acts through which virtuousness can be attained. In this understanding, "goods" may be regarded not merely as material objects whose sole reason for existence is to be traded for financial or material profit, but also as means to accomplish that which is good and moral. This second purpose of trade is precisely the "surplus" whose subject matter consists of both moral conduct and ethical consideration of the

other. An added benefit of this surplus is that because moral values are fixed, they will stabilize the market and reduce its volatility (*RH*, 91–92).

If the principle of surplus endows goods with ethical content, then trade in goods can be seen as a moral act. And once this situation obtains, the significance of economic development and growth undergoes a profoundly qualitative change, making it a double act of sanctification, one for the goods themselves and the other for the act of trading in them. When this transformation takes place in each field of economic activity and development, the various parts making up the globalization field will interact with one another according to this logic, "creating" in the process a "sound global environment" and "raising humankind" to a nobler station (*RH*, 91).

Maintaining connection with "spiritual horizons" is not, for Taha, a rhetorical ploy but a deeply ingrained psychological mode of being. When people purchase objects, their feelings of ownership and exclusive control of these objects are the most salient characteristics that constitute the full limits of the transaction. And it is precisely here where the sense of exclusivity and thus self-centeredness and selfishness begin, and where godlike possessiveness finds manifestation. Attributing ultimate ownership to God as *real ownership* and deeming its human equivalent as nothing more than a derivative translate into mitigating the sense of entitlement and unqualified ownership.

With such a deeply rooted conviction of divine ownership, humans will no longer regard material wealth and purchased objects surrounding them as entitlements for which they necessarily need not be grateful. A deep sense of divine ownership engenders a cognate and parallel sense of *qualified* human ownership, a sense that affects the social perception of the very object that is owned.[58] The regard for the object thus acquires "thickness," a multilayered signification in which private ownership and right of enjoyment mesh into communal sharing. To see the originary right of the object as anchored beyond and outside of the supposedly owning subject is to mitigate self-entitlement, objectively and perceptually. It is also to create a social, if not psychoepistemic, bridge between the right of the self and the right of others. This, Taha seems to imply, also engenders a double meaning for communal and socialized economics: the redistribution of wealth here does not end when the modes of production and their material outcomes have been reasonably and fairly allocated to the social order. The redistribution continues beyond this stage so as to "thicken" it by precipitating a

second, unceasing wave of wealth redistribution, not by a state or state-owned social agency, but by the very "owners" of the already-redistributed wealth. This is a continuous and unending process, which is only possible when wealth is seen through the prism of such a deeply and psychologically engrained belief of ownership.

In his argument, Taha might also have said that if current capitalism amounts to an economic theology, the Islamic "economic" conception is the genuine displacement of and a true alternative to it in a truly postmodern age. For this conception engenders a wholly new concept of property that is anti-Lockean and nonmodern. But then, we have seen that Taha formulates his thought without having recourse to postmodernity, since Western modernity is nothing more than a mere misapplication of the universal spirit of true modernity, one that has been unsuccessfully and hopelessly trying to solve the very same problems it has created.

The second principle that must be brought to bear upon current forms of globalization is that of reflection (*mabda' al-iˁtibār*). Like the first principle, it is preoccupied mainly with the rerationalization of globalization, thereby engaging in a series of intellectual operations that aim to correct its defects. The rational narrowness with which globalization has been and continues to be conceived has meant a severe neglect of praxis (*ˁamal*), a neglect occasioned by the exclusive control, if not hegemony, of *technique* in the fields of science and knowledge. *Technique* has created a world in which human actions have become "procedural" (Ar. *ijrāʾāt*), that is, technical. The idea is to change these procedural acts and enrich them in such a way as to convert them into *aˁmāl*, i.e., into substantive acts, works, and praxes infused with moral intent and endowed with an ethical content and structure.

Accordingly, the epistemological principle of reflection is set in motion when a transition from procedural and mechanical acts to moral actions is embarked upon. The principle is defined as follows: Useful knowledge can obtain only by (1) reflecting upon a thing's rationale (*ḥikma*) *before* thinking about the means to attain it (*sabab*), and (2) reflecting upon its ramified consequences (*maʾāl*) *before* reflecting on its state (*ḥāl*) in the present (*RH*, 93–94). Here, "rationale" is constituted by a morally grounded reason, to be differentiated from procedural, instrumental, or mechanical reason. The latter investigates *sabab*-based reasons, whereas the former investigates, and thus is guided by, *ḥikma*-based reasons. The difference between *sabab* and

ḥikma is that *sabab* yields a "caused effect" (Why does the thing desired exist? How does it become a necessity?), whereas ḥikma aims to accomplish a particular moral goal or purpose (What is this for? To what purpose or end?). Another way to distinguish the two is to say that the effect of *sabab* is limited, monolithic, or uniform (ʿalā wajh wāḥid), but ḥikma involves consideration of the larger moral landscape in which the act or thing locates itself (*RH*, 93). Thus, an act or a thing may have a *sabab* leading to it, which is to say, a way to bring it into existence, but this commission may not be supported by good moral reasons, in which case it should not be undertaken. Ḥikma thus is not an operative mechanism. It represents a good reason for an act to be brought into being, but it is equipped with no *means* capable of accomplishing that end.

It is clear then, Taha continues, that moral deliberation and reflection enable knowledge to delimit the reasons for things by rationalizing them as moral values encompassing these things. Only then does knowledge cease to be a mere assemblage of technical possibilities with potential to be as harmful as they are beneficial.

As for the act's ramified consequences (*maʾāl*), it is well known that every human action has a present and a future, the present being the immediate context in which the act originates and comes to completion as act. The future of an act occurs after the act qua act has been performed, which is to say that the future is the immediate and distant temporality in which the effects of a given act unfold. Some acts yield effects that can be observed and assessed but other acts may result in far-reaching consequences and long-term effects that one cannot possibly observe, monitor, or even imagine. "Technical man" tends to see acts as existing in the short term, never making that crucial passage to deliberating and reflecting upon the moral implications of acts in the long term (*RH*, 94). The principle of reflection requires serious thinking about the ramified consequences of the act before anything else, especially before succumbing to its immediate attraction or benefit. Against the logic of technical man, an act with evident long-term benefits ought to be commissioned, although it might have negative effects in the short run. Conversely, an act whose short-term benefit is evident ought not be commissioned if it can be established that its long-term effects are harmful. Thus the epistemic criterion for this principle is thinking and deliberation about ramified consequences, a criterion quite different from

procedural and mechanical reasoning, where acts are seen as technical possibilities that must be materialized, and where the very process of materialization is taken as a sufficient and autonomous measure.

The adoption of this new outlook requires new rules and principles, foremost among which is the principle that "we must not rush into" the application of science and technology except to the extent that these are beneficial to people. "Beneficial," Taha clarifies, means beneficial in moral and ethical terms, and this must be understood in the widest manner possible. The central assumption taken for granted here is that whatever the situation, knowledge, science, and technology are subordinate to the moral imperative, not the other way round. And a subsidiary of this principle of moral reflection is that technology and technical science (and all knowledge for that matter) must be the servant of existing needs, not a creator of new ones.

Taha does not provide empirical examples to illustrate his argument, nor does he specify the criteria on the basis of which one can establish long-term benefits. In other words, how does one know that an action, understood here in the most comprehensive sense, has an immediate benefit but is potentially harmful in such a way as to outweigh those benefits? Yet, in light of the recent proliferation of informational technology, it is not difficult to see why such an empirical illustration may not be necessary. All one needs to invoke is the technology of social media, from the iPhone to the informational culture conveyed through this instrument. Far from being a mere Luddite, Taha is arguing that this technology stands in the service of greedy capitalism and has proven to have adverse effects on its users. It has not attended to any of the ethical desiderata he is calling for, or in fact to ethical desiderata however defined. If we abstract the materialist interests and greed of capitalism and commercial ambition, there is no ethical value in this technology. If there is an agreement among nations/groups on this claim, even in a minimal form, then any further venture to develop, say, the iPhone technology, and to produce the "next generation" of phone, must be halted.

Finally, the third principle, through which rectification the moral deficiency in current globalization practices can be accomplished, is the principle of communicative acquaintance (*mabda' al-taʿāruf*).[59] The goal of this principle is to transition from the current state of using communication technology and communicative practices primarily as means of transmitting information to a state in which the World Wide Web becomes the venue

for creating *communicative acquaintance* between and among individuals, a move productive of ethical and moral conduct. What Taha terms communicative acquaintance is a new rationalizing approach toward creating a fundamental moral matrix for people's communication with one another. It is based on the assumption that communication is channeled through the good, agreeable, and thoughtful language that emanates from mutually considerate and caring attitudes. As we will see in the following chapters, "caring" is a concept loaded with "care of the self," which Taha will transform into "care of the soul" (*rūḥ*), the locus of ethics. In his philosophical scheme of things, the self emerges as the seat of possession, the faculty whose natural penchant is to "attribute" things in the world, especially material things, to itself and its subject. "Good" here is therefore always an "ethical good," not an instrumentally or just a materially driven communicative action.

Communicative acquaintance represents reciprocity and dialectic between and among the communicators, involving respect and gratitude. Since the exchanged unit of communication (*khabar*) must inherently consist of goodness, its reception must engender in the recipient those two reactions: respect and gratitude. Respect is the matrix and foundation of communication, without which acquaintance is impossible. And since the communicated unit is itself a good deed, an ethically charged gesture that is intended to be performative, the recipient would be acting in a manner consistent with this new communicative culture when she genuinely feels gratitude. The positing of gratitude in this mode of communicative existence would then be the engine that maintains the continual functioning of the system, since gratitude necessarily—if not by definition—provokes a sense of debt in the recipient, one that requires her to reciprocate goodness. The connection between the "sender" and the "recipient" will therefore "rest on a relationship that is ethical par excellence" (*RH*, 96). Needless to say, if these are the foundations of communication, then such notions as tolerance, forgiveness, closeness, and friendship will automatically follow.

There is no assumption here that the communicators must stand on an equally ethical footing, as long as the common denominator of communicative interaction assumes a certain level of ethical content and rests on the acceptance of ethical desiderata. Taha sees in this interaction an element of "competition" (*tanāfus*), an element whose function is to "preserve" and promote the ethical relationship that brings the communicators together. He also takes for granted that a degree of disparity in the educational and

cultural (*thaqāfī*) backgrounds of the communicators may exist, this itself being the raison d'être of communication to begin with. It is after all for the sake of remedying this deficit, one whose roots are essentially ethical, that communicative acquaintance is effected in the first place (*RH*, 96–97).

It is crucial, I think, to conclude with an emphasis on a central point, namely, it is this ethical communicative practice that constitutes the foundation upon which rests Taha's claims for Islam's burden of undertaking the ethical leadership of the world. If Islam is singularly charged with this mission, then there cannot be a way to fulfill the mission outside this ethically charged dialogue, the essence of his *ḥiwār*. If this is perceived in any manner as a challenge to conversion through dialogue, then this dialogue must be patient, open-minded, and, most importantly, thoughtful, peaceful, and ethical.

Recasting Reason

I

On more than one occasion in the last two chapters, we have seen Taha critique instrumental rationality, which has foregrounded the twentieth century in major calamities and devastations. The way to proceed in constructing what he calls the "second modernity" is to adopt a worldview constituted by morally grounded reason, a "thick" form of reason that is brought to bear upon the problems that have arisen in both the Western and, consequently, the Islamic contexts. This task he attempts to accomplish in *al-ʿAmal al-Dīnī wa-Tajdīd al-ʿAql* (*AD*),[1] whose declared goal is to provide the philosophical foundations for modern Islam's "religious awakening" (*al-yaqaẓa al-dīniyya*), equated with *al-yaqaẓa al-ʿiqadiyya*, a credal and spiritual awakening. With all the vibrancy attending this awakening since the end of the nineteenth century, it nonetheless continues to lack a rigorous methodological framing, a productive theoretical apparatus, and proper philosophical foundations (*AD*, 9). In other words, this awakening needs a prior, or preparatory, stage of renewal, one that sets up the intellectual, methodological, and theoretical props of a project that has thus far been largely devoid of such foundations.

In order to accomplish this task, two general conditions must obtain. First, no comprehensive intellectual foundations can be constructed unless experience, especially spiritual-ethical experience, is both thoroughly expounded and understood for its deep, entrenched structures. Second, this

form of experience can never aspire to a proper grounding framework and intellectual ordering without the aid of a new powerful rational method, one that lays the grounds for the current awakening, but also one that continues to be *productive* of innovative ways to sustain engagement with a changing future.

Yet, at the same time, experience is the sole guarantee of a consistent and well-integrated state of awakening, bestowing on it a form of rationality that is precisely productive in the ways just described. As praxis and living, experience becomes as much a test of validity and legitimacy as rational consistency and rational power. Gone are the days, Taha seems to say, when rational argument, as it has been conventionally defined in modernity, may be allowed to stand as adequate or sufficient. "It is time to conduct an evaluation of those who discourse about matters of belief (ʿaqīda), assessing the extent to which their (theoretical) argument corresponds to their (actual) behavior, as well as the extent to which they deserve to be a role model on the basis of what they preach" (*AD*, 10).

Clearly, Taha is preparing for a sustained intellectual offensive against the dissonance between speech and practice, between declared intents and formal positions, on the one hand, and actual engagements, or rather the lack thereof, with praxis and practical ethics, on the other. The target turns out to be not only his Arab and Muslim contemporaries, but also the Western traditions, particularly of the liberal variety.[2] Consistent with his tireless lamentation and rebuke of modern Muslims' "blind following" of their Western counterparts, he regards the dualism of theory and practice, of speech and deed, as only derivatively Islamic, and originally a Western way of understanding and dealing with the world.

The interconnected and overlapping layers of practical experience and rationality find manifestations in the analytical identification of three forms of reason. None of these forms can be properly understood without apprehending its relationship to practice and experience, a relationship that determines the quality of rationality involved. Practice and experience, as well as their correlative praxis, must not be understood in their basic or generic meanings, but rather as complex forms of embodiment, where "technologies of the soul"[3] permeate the totality of human conduct. This embodiment through iterative praxis constantly reinstates and reaffirms the psycho-epistemic communication between the human—who never forgets his or her createdness—and nature as a holistic system, a communication that

precludes the very possibility of man as the end of himself.[4] Expectedly, the direction of discussion progresses from the weakest form of reason and rationality to the strongest form, which Taha deems superior and ethically most compelling (*AD*, 15). We recall that the latter standard is for him absolutely unsurpassable, since the ethical is not only "the central domain"[5] but nothing less than the essence of humanity (*SA*, 147).[6]

II

The most inferior of the three forms of reason, denuded reason (al-aql al-mujarrad),[7] represents "an act by which its owner conceives an aspect of a thing while believing this act to be true, basing his judgment (*taṣdīq*)[8] on a particular piece of evidence."[9] Noteworthy here is the characterization of reason as an act intended to circumvent, if not displace, the Aristotelian and Islamic conception of it as an essence, one that claims to qualitatively distinguish between man and animal.[10] The "Greek conception" tends to objectify and overdivide the world, because the tendency toward objectification rigidifies the exercise of thought by way of casting it into a mode characterized by autonomy, differentiated space, identity, and individuation (*tashkhīṣ*).[11] It tends to be divisive also because it breaks up the otherwise integral experience of the rational subject into separate and autonomous domains. Characterizing reason as an essential attribute of "man" forces an artificial distinction that obviates the presence of other attributes that are equally, if not more, weighty in the constitution of the human subject, such as praxis, experience, and practical living. The argument for reason's essence would thus require granting the same status to these and other attributes, thereby rendering this multiplicity reflective of the unity of human subject (*AD*, 18).[12]

The exercise of reason represents a type of behavior, an act, through which a person tries to understand herself or the surroundings that she inhabits. This is then akin to the faculty of sight, which cannot be claimed to constitute an autonomous essence, since it is an act brought into existence by the eye, just as reason is an act generated by a real attribute, termed *qalb* in the Islamic tradition.[13] The relationship of reason to *qalb* is analogous to the relationship of vision to the eye. In the Islamic tradition, Taha argues, reason "as an act of *qalb*" took on various forms, chief among being (a) comprehending the relation between two knowable objects, (b) barring

the reasoning subject from falling to the whim of desires that lead to harm, and (c) retaining and holding on to that which has been procured in the *qalb*.[14] Reason seems to play the role of the *qalb's* keeper and guard (*AD*, 19).

The disqualification of reason as essence has to commend it the constant human practice of judging reason as good or bad, as beneficial or harmful or evil. Reason is praised when its sound epistemic methods lead to a good action, and condemned when they lead to harmful results, precisely as humans normally behave in their commission or omission of acts. The act of conduct (commissioning), Taha seems to say, is merely a consequent and continuation of the prior act of rational thinking and deliberation. Theft, for instance, follows on the heels of, and continues, the rational thinking of the thief, just as any good conduct is the result of a prior act of reflection. As acts, the former is judged bad, the latter good.

Reason also rests on the principle of transformation, just as any attribute or act does. "According to this principle, it is possible to direct and influence the *qalb* so that it may abandon one rational attribute in favor of another, one that is better and *more* rational, or, to the contrary, one that is less rational and thus more ignorant" (*AD*, 21). Reason, for Taha, thus appears to be a highly relative attribute, never devoid of a degree of "ignorance," however negligible. Ignorance and its resultant evil are not lack of reason, but reason that has gone awry. Needless to say, Taha's claim is proven by an entire century's worth of empirical evidence, the Nazi devastation wrought on the world being just one index among many. The Third Reich can hardly be accused of irrationality, if one adopts the perspective of an agent who seeks the most efficient methods to annihilate a large number of people. Reason in this case was sound, yet unethical and evil.

Furthermore, the description of reason as generating theoretical-scientific knowledge is not describing an essential attribute concomitant with the *qalb*. If the latter was taken as the embodiment of this reason, it was due to circumstantial and contingent situations that could have been otherwise and in fact entirely different, this being apparently a reference to the circumstantial and contingent forms of knowledge Europe produced given its own conditions. Such different circumstances could quite conceivably give rise to another distinguishable rational attribute that would in turn lead to a vastly different kind of scientific knowledge. And if this is the case, then it is equally conceivable and quite possible to invent a rational-scientific

method that is different from—and indeed no less rational and scientific than—what has thus far prevailed in modernity. This, for Taha, is a proposition that must be admitted as valid (*AD*, 21).

Taha is certainly critical of traditional Muslim philosophers and theologians nearly as much as he is of Western Enlightenment thought. In the context of his critique of denuded reason, he launches an attack on the very premises and arguments of Islamic philosophical and theological metaphysics, arguing that there is no certainty to be had in the entirety of such discourses on God and existence, surely not in the same sense in which one speaks of certainty with regard to mathematical and natural sciences. "Therefore," he concludes, "the path of comprehending divine truths through denuded reason . . . is blocked or, at the very least, a narrow one" (*AD*, 39).[15]

Yet, there are wider and more fundamental limitations on the validity of denuded reason, and the examples cited here derive exclusively from the Western intellectual landscape. Taha identifies three types of limitation, the first of which relates to formal logic. Through the operation of denuded reason, the logician constructs sets of premises, axioms, formulas, rules, and symbols that allow the elaboration of endless proofs for theorems that almost seem to be a form of intellectual play, but that, in the final analysis, turn out to be inconclusive. If only a single unit of the sequence cannot be proven, then the theorem will remain inconclusive, if it does not collapse. "It is well known that some of the most famous sequences of logical proof lack the attribute of conclusiveness" (*AD*, 41). Furthermore, mathematics seems to be plagued with problems of incompleteness, as Gödel's two Incompleteness Theorems show (*AD*, 42).[16] In sum, Taha's assault on sequences of logical proofs comes up with no more radical conclusion than that which Bertrand Russell reached:

> Pure mathematics consists entirely of such asseverations as that, if such and such a proposition is true of anything, then such and such another proposition is true of that thing. . . . It's essential not to discuss whether the proposition is really true, and not to mention what the anything is of which it is supposed to be true. . . . If our hypothesis is about anything and not about some one or more particular things, then our deductions constitute mathematics. Thus mathematics may be defined as the subject in which we never know what we are talking about, nor whether what we are saying is true.[17]

Second, it is widely believed that the laws of abstract reason, which logic makes as its field of investigation, have a single nature and are thus common to, and shared by, all rational persons. However, if we contemplate the history and reality of this discipline, we will find that this belief is unsupportable since logic has become occupied with countless theorems and axioms, and thus with endless modes of reasoning, including mechanical and computerized forms that have been developed as independent fields of investigation. The field of logical investigation has thus been carved up into specialized areas of knowledge, ranging from propositional to predicate logic, from relevance to paraconsistent logics, and passing through intuitionist and computational logics.

Although these divergent fields of knowledge purport to describe denuded reason and the laws and rules by which it works, they have ended up conflicting, if not contradicting, one another. These inconsistencies are exemplified in non-Euclidean geometry, and in the well-known irreconcilability of relativity theory with quantum mechanics (*AD*, 44). Such issues suffice to cast doubt about the existence of a scientific discourse—*in the strict scientific meaning of the term*—that can prove reason to be *one reality* that all people share or agree upon.

Inconsistency is not the worst part of the story. With all the perceived mathematical and mechanical accomplishments, modern man was led to the belief that *technique* (*tiqaniyya*)[18] will lead to the happiness of all humanity, as these accomplishments of technique enable man to subdue nature in accordance with his needs and values. Upon reflection, however, these goals have been far from realized, since *technique* has permeated and overwhelmed all aspects of social life, forming along the way "a *technique* universe" that wholly engulfs and dominates humankind. Ironically, the inventions with which modern man has aimed to subdue nature turned out to be the end of his freedom, as he has become servile to them instead of acting as their master.

Technique takes on a life of its own, and develops its own logic that has become independent of human will, and its inner logic rests on two profoundly harmful principles: The first is the irrational principle that "everything is possible." This principle removes any commitments, deterrents, or limitations, be they moral, ethical, natural, or otherwise. And once man adopts this mechanical-instrumental principle, technique overtakes all that lies within the scope of human endeavor, to the harmful consequences

that have been witnessed. The second is the nonmoral principle that "what is possible must be done" or "what can be done shall be done." This principle entails absolving oneself of all moral restraint, the latter standing in the way of committing certain unethical acts, such as the destruction, or changing the nature, of creation, or the production of chemical, biological, and radiological weapons, among much else. The main point here is not just the destructive effects of technique, but the manner in which rationalism retracts into ignorance, where action loses its moral bearings. "It is as if the paradigm of denuded reason, in its applications and effects, carries its own seeds of destruction" (*AD*, 45; but also *SA*, 66).

These effects of technique, described as "enslavement" (*istirqāqiyya*), stand surely in the company of others, chaos (*fawḍawiyya*) being especially noteworthy. The prevailing belief is that knowledge is cumulative and that one layer of it fits on top of another, as if knowledge were like a flight of stairs, leading us toward the highest, if not perfect, stage of knowledge. This progressive cumulative perception of knowledge is in fact belied by the actual history of science. In reality, scientific theories do not always build on one another, and some cause serious ruptures more than continuities—this being an echo of the Kuhnian thesis. These theories can therefore hardly be said to complement or support previous paradigms. Some theories, furthermore, take off on their own to ask new questions, most of which cannot be answered within the bounds of that theory, questions that multiply and spread in every direction, so much so that they appear to exist in a state of chaos (*khabṭ*; *AD*, 46).

Third, and finally, are philosophical limitations. It is assumed that denuded reason is dissociated from material forms, as if it yields universal meanings entirely disconnected and separate from sensory matters whose relevance ceases beyond the point of being an aid for reason to reach abstracted forms. This, Taha insists, is far from the truth. There is a complementarity between the formal sciences—regarded as nonmaterialist—and extramental, experimental, and thus materialist sciences. The complementarity comes to view in the manner in which the formal sciences are used to shape the results of material sciences and to formalize (*ṣawrana*) their scientific theories. And this is explicable in terms of the nature of laws that render abstract all rational constructs, for reliance on such laws to understand things in the world rests on three operations, all of which bestow a materialist form on perceptibles (*AD*, 47).

These operations consist of the following: (1) Once the rational method is brought to bear upon an issue, the latter is converted into, or cast as, an analyzable and experimental phenomenon, causing an elision between the issue's real nature and the manner in which it was materialistically recast. This is tantamount to creating an identity between gold holdings and (the symbolic value of) actual currency, or to "bestowing a materialist appearance" (*taẓhīr*) upon things that do not lend themselves to such a materializing act. (2) The process of *taẓhīr* cannot be complete without extrapolating the object of analysis into a spatial and temporal existence (*taḥyīz*), rendering it subject to the methods of calculation, quantification, division, and reconstruction. The effect of this process is to force measurability and calculability upon that which does not lend itself to such evaluations, just as no amount of medical-scientific-technological scanning can assess the nature, quantity, or quality of the emotion of humility (*khushūʿ*) in a worshiper's prayer. And (3) knowledge acquired by denuded reason does not result from a sudden spark of illumination, as if it were an incident of instantaneous inspiration; rather, it is the result of methods of thinking that rest on prior methods that in turn rest on yet prior methods, enough to control the field of understanding and subject it to constrained forms of calculable experiment and scrutiny. These intervening and mediating methods (*tawsīṭ*) are controlled by the following principles: (a) the more complex and subtle a thing is in its material form, the more numerous and complicated the methods needed to understand it; and (b) an inverse of the former principle, namely, the more extensive and corporeal the thing is, the fewer the methods that are needed to comprehend it.

From these principles one infers that materialist methods will inevitably be exhausted and consumed in the attempt to comprehend the complex and subtle matters of spirituality and transcendentalism. Through its three operations, denuded reason is thus closer to being a materializing entity than an abstract attribute, falsely presumed to be separate from material forms. Being engulfed in materialism, so-called denuded reason cannot think outside material considerations, and when it encounters nonmaterial realities, its materialistic limitations constitute obstacles that stand in the way of cognition.

Furthermore, denuded reason has had a checkered history that reveals, in its diachronic manifestations, its weakness. A close look at knowledge systems shows that, periodically, theories within a system, otherwise deemed

exemplary, at one point or another become suspect, and are thus discarded as erroneous or irrational. They are replaced by others, now deemed exemplary, when that status was in fact indisputably for a long time enjoyed by those that have just been superseded. But even at their best, Taha seems to say, logical theories and theories of denuded rationality have been unduly obsessed with laws of noncontradiction between and among them, when in fact this ideal need not be attained. As widely attested in the daily practices of humans everywhere, we live according to contradictory rules, without us being irrational in the least. Without such pliability, life would become impossible (*AD*, 48–49).

Finally, denuded reason is not necessary. It is widely held that denuded reason's province is to prove the unity or even universality of human rationality and that it has the exclusive authority to set the criteria for this rationality. These claims are refuted by the following two considerations: First, the modes of reason prevailing nowadays were inherited from a specific culture and a particular history, and none of them can be foisted upon other cultures as either inevitable or deterministic. History could have played otherwise, and we (Muslims) could have, in another time and place, chanced upon other systems of thought. Or, we could have invented for ourselves another system of rationality altogether.[19] Second, it is quite conceivable that in the future a "nation" (*umma*) or culture may abandon these familiar forms of rationality and invent for itself other rational forms of thought without being influenced by denuded reason (*AD*, 49). Taha's point seems to be that each society or culture develops its own internal logic, a system of living that attends to the rationalization of its values. And each society, governed thus by an internal logic of its own, develops a form of reason, but no form, qua form, can have a universal validity, for the internal logics, being always unique, consequently yield unique forms of rationality. The question for Taha, one would suspect, is not the form as form, and not rationality qua rationality—these are variable and in some strong sense means to an end. The end, the highest value in his project, is ethical formation, potentially achievable through a variety of forms. But none of these includes denuded reason, which is inherently incapable of such formation. On the other hand, the Islamic solution he is attempting to provide remains one among possible others drawn from within and without Islam. And it is in the layers of the next two forms of reason that the Islamic alternative distinguishes itself from Europe's denuded reason.

III

Taha goes to great lengths to articulate his conception of guided reason (*al-ʿaql al-musaddad*).[20] Superior to denuded reason, guided reason is represented in acts through which an agent aims to bring about a benefit or to avoid a harm by means of performing works dictated by the Moral Law (*Sharʿ*). The choice of the term *musaddad* is quite deliberate, since more common designations such as *ʿaql ghayr mustaqill* or *ʿaql muqayyad* (nonautonomous or limited reason) possess negative connotations, likely to engender the false impression that what we are speaking of is a sort of reason that is constricted and constrained, reason that is incapable of opening up new frontiers and horizons. To the contrary, guided reason is superior to denuded reason because it is empowered by its *sharʿī* affiliation to stay the correct course in articulating knowledge that leads to benefit, this being embodied in praxis (*AD*, 67). This conception entails the understanding that the act must fulfill three necessary conditions:

First, the act must accord with the Moral Law. It is insufficient for an act to be merely intentional *and* "directed" (i.e., subject to *tawjīh*), for such an act may nonetheless remain unguided even in the presence of these two attributes. For despite all the intellectual efforts that the agent exercises in choosing the best act and in investigating its implications, the act may still be harmful to the agent herself, if not also to others. Only an act supported by the guiding principles of the Moral Law can permit the agent to avoid harm, always assuming she *intends* the act to bring benefit (*AD*, 58).[21]

Taha does not explain why the Moral Law, the Sharīʿa, should be entrusted with such a charge. But his argument would make good sense if we realize, as I believe he does, that the Sharīʿa historically did prove itself capable of forming subjectivities through what he calls guided reason. But it is also important to understand what it is in Sharīʿa's history and character that equips it with such a capacity, one that presupposes both the absence of arbitrariness and the presence of a spatiotemporal, diachronic-cum-synchronic, and communal conception of higher principles. Representing values that are seen to stand above the arbitrariness of ever-changing human predilections, the Sharīʿa regulated the entire range of the social order, either directly through its jurists or by means of a fairly well-defined and limited delegation through the executive. It was constituted by the "legislative power" par excellence, and "legislation" was both a cumulative

and collective process, which is to say that "law," in both the moral and the technical legal senses, was the result of *a corporate-like entity, a collectivity of juristic voices over time and space, and not subject to the will or whim of any single jurist, ruler, or even a contemporaneous group of jurists.* Thus, no one could claim ownership of the law. And since the source of all moral-legal authority was an anthropological-hermeneutical engagement with authorized texts by a formally undefinable body of men of piety across regions and centuries, the law not only was beyond political reach but also stood, as the embodiment of these higher principles, above all human institutions (notwithstanding its built-in structures of legal change).[22]

The historical record, Taha argues, is replete with evidence to show that despite all the good intentions and best efforts to properly *direct* human acts through denuded reason, the actual results of these acts have often not been as positive as the original intentions themselves: as intimated earlier, the well-intended projects to unify human reason, to rationalize the world, to bring technique into human service, and to organize knowledge have all yielded destructive results, contrary and opposite to the original intent. In fact, they have resulted in the fragmentation of reason, an increase in irrationality, the enslavement of man by machines, and the dissipation and scattering of knowledge (*tashtīt*). "If man has indeed lost total control over those things that are closest and most familiar to him, then what will be his condition with regard to the hidden future and those matters most obscure and unfamiliar to him?" (*AD*, 59). Illusions of progress through reason have led modern man into a repetitious cycle of hope, promise, action, and failure, only to return, with the same method, to mend failure with another cycle of hope, promise, action, and failure. All this is the consequence of the inability to understand the absolute necessity of a Moral Law. Instead, this Law has become the locus of derision and criticism, as if it were the source of evil.

Second, according to the Moral Law, each act must bring about a benefit. This is also to say that it is insufficient, if not inadequate, to bring about the benefit through other means, since these are intrinsically defective, irrespective of the extent of rational scrutiny deployed in justification of the act. By contrast, acts generated by the Moral Law are safeguarded by three characteristics or considerations: (1) Nondivine, self-made law can never rise above material considerations of life. It will therefore always remain materialistic to the core, because it cannot adopt the ethical values that are

the natural lot of the Moral Law's follower. These values are so supreme that they subordinate material and materialistic considerations and rise above them, making them their subsidiaries. On the contrary, values issuing from nonmoral law remain—as they have in late modernity—bound by immediate, if not sightsighted, considerations, however lofty these might first appear; eventually, though, they become themselves subordinated to the dominant and dominating materialistic (if not hedonistic and base) values. The effects of the Moral Law are to control and mitigate the "thick" and heavy effects of materialist values by embedding them in, and managing them through, the moral domain. (2) Benefits accruing by means of nondivine law remain limited both in their desiderata and in the scope of the means by which these desiderata are defined and implemented. Thus, benefits reveal themselves to the agent applying this law only to the limited extent that these means permit. It is implied here that such means are not situated within a wider system of moral-spiritual values that connects these individual benefits to a system of benefits. The Moral Law escapes this narrow and superficial path (*saṭḥiyya*), always providing depth and range for all human acts. And (3) benefits accruing within a system of nondivine moral law are subjective—in the sense that they are individualistic—however much they are based on a common standard and regulated by general principles and rules. Here, Taha is rather terse, leaving much unaccounted for. Regardless, his point seems to be that subjectivity (*dhātiyya*) in this particular context leads to self-centeredness and selfishness, among other unseemly qualities, because the law followed is not grounded in a cosmology that safeguards the interests of man while at the same time preserving the interests of all other forms of life. Subjectivity, in other words, seems to breed anthropocentrism, and this in turn breeds love for control and power. Divine law ensures the permanent presence of higher principles that both control and guide the subject in negotiating his subjectivity. In the Moral Law, benefits are set within a communal system in which the individual attempts to realize benefits for his own interest but with equal attention to the welfare of the community in which she lives. Seen from the perspective of his project as a whole, the "community" in Taha's conception is an ever-expanding circle that ranges from the family and immediate social community to the global community, situated within the physical world and within a particular cosmology. In this system, the realization of benefit for one is not distinguished from the realization of benefit for all (*AD*, 61).

Third, guided reason presupposes the agent's engagement in works (*ishtighāl*). Generally put, the concept of "works"—which involves habituated practice, "technologies of the soul," and psychoepistemic ethical cultivation—represents a venue from which to exit from the confines of theory (*naẓar*) toward an engagement with praxis (*ʿamal*), understood as an epistemically productive site. The relationship between theory and praxis in this sense has been the preoccupation of thinkers for centuries and millennia, but has nevertheless emerged in modernity with some intensity only to favor, on the whole, a reduced relationship of theory to activity and activism, productivity and production, application, *technique*, and certainly praxis. In keeping with this reconfiguration, *sharʿī* praxis as a distinct category has been expunged from these fields of action, since, the contention goes, it is not a tangible experience (*ghayr malmūs*). Yet, the materialists (*al-malmūsiyyūn*, proponents of the *malmūs*) agree that, for an act to be "tangible" and to possess quantifiable and measurable effects of recognizable benefit to the public interest (*al-ṣāliḥ al-ʿāmm*), they ought to admit that *sharʿī* praxis fulfills the conditions they have set forth, even exceeds them. Said praxis manages to accomplish this feat because it is concerned not with fanciful theorization or excessive theoretical explorations,[23] but rather with actual practice as producing actual moral effects within a social order. Nor is this all. As stated earlier, this type of act or praxis has the added virtue of constraining and controlling the materialism of acts performed on the basis of non-*sharʿī* prescriptions. Being deeply psychological, *sharʿī* acts also seep deeper into the agent's soul, creating profound psychological convictions, which in turn has the power of social transcendence, namely, the pervasive spreading of these acts, from one individual to the next, throughout society. With this characterization, Taha seems to consciously aim at excluding the state or any other hegemonic or sovereign entity from producing such effects (see chapter 6).

Essential to Taha's theory is the distinction between *naẓar* and *ʿamal*, or *ishtighāl*, a distinction so central that people can be classified according to it into *ahl al-naẓar* and *ahl al-ishtighāl* (the "people of theory" and "people of praxis"). Against the former, the latter hold the practicability and applicability of any science to be its mark of distinction: the more the science is applicable and involved in practice, the more useful and superior to other fields it is. Which is to say that in any ranking of importance and "degree of honor" (*tashrīf*), those sciences that attend to works and praxis will stand at

the top of the list, with the sciences that instruct in the art of living an ethical life at the head of these (*AD*, 62).[24]

Praxis has the effect of removing external *and* internal impediments, or at least minimizing their control over and manipulation of the agent.[25] And the more the agent becomes free of such impediments, the more these works contribute to the refinement of his perceptions and moral knowledge, and vise versa. This process of praxis and enhancement, dialectical in nature, works to expand (*tawsīʿ*) the moral horizons. Nevertheless, Taha argues that, in their more narrowly conceived understanding of praxis, the "proponents of tangible acts" (*al-malmūsiyyūn*) have erred in reducing praxis to sociopolitical praxis, as if there was no activity of greater or equal value. Fundamentally materialists, they have arrogated central importance to *this* practice, and bestowed on it expansive meanings that have culminated in its subordination to other spheres. Yet in doing so, they have forgotten that this practice remains constrained by multiple considerations that reflect higher values. This is to say that an adequate regard for these considerations will undermine the autonomous status they have assigned their preferred form of practice. Unlike sociopolitical practice, religious works (*ʿibāda*) expand the horizons of perception and "educate" the self in higher morals that in turn aid in ridding that self of unethical habits and beliefs. Once this is accomplished, the moral effects percolate into lower spheres of activity, whether political, social, or otherwise. In their loyalty to the sociopolitical, the materialists therefore have missed a crucial link in human behavior, one that is located between their kind of practice and the moral resources of the agent, themselves nothing other than religious works (*AD*, 64).

Furthermore, engaging works and praxis has a corrective effect on the performing agent, directing and redirecting her to avoid perverse and harmful behavior. Without designating them as such, Taha here is speaking of the technologies of the soul and the entire range of habituating techniques that, because of their repetitive acculturating effects on the body and mind, act as an exemplar in the agent's conscience, always providing a benchmark that nags at the agent's soul with incessant reminders of the necessity to hold on to moral conduct and to revert back, at every turn, to the grand principles of ethical behavior that act as correctives (*taṣwīb*) to diversion. This he calls *taʾṣīl*, the harking back to the (relevant) "original principle" (*al-qāʿida al-aṣliyya*) of *sharʿī* conduct (*AD*, 65).

Guided reason thus amounts to denuded reason *thickened* by *sharʿī* works;[26] it does not lack autonomy (*istiqlāl*), as it is widely but wrongly held. Instead, it lifts denuded reason from its state of remission (*istiqāla*, lit. resignation), since this constrained form of reason has effectively abandoned divine command and prohibition. By embracing works and action as its modus vivendi, guided reason is not encumbered or rendered defective by its abstracted and theoretical nature. In other words, guided reason amounts to the *masmūʿ*, that form of rationality which seeks the company of particular *sharʿī* methods of action and works anchored in higher principles.

Despite the neologism introduced in the form of *masmūʿ*, there is virtually nothing new in this conception, since it was pervasive in *sharʿī* theory and practice throughout premodern Islam, with the jurists (*ʿulamāʾ*) explicitly named as referents.[27] "The *masmūʿ* is that which is sought by a rational act and which falls within the boundaries of that act" (*AD*, 68–69). The active agent of the *masmūʿ*, the *sāmiʿ*, is the one who directs his rational act toward a desideratum (*maṭlūb*), seeking proximity to it, in the sense not of epistemic control over it, but rather of action-based propinquity, where knowledge and action unite, or stand at least in a relationship of concomitance (*talāzum*). The meaning of concomitance here includes a dialectically fertilizing process, where virtues inhering in reason inform action, and virtues of praxis instruct and refine reason. Thus, the relationship between reason and praxis appears here as a psychospiritual one, amounting to a quest to cultivate a desire, a love, for the action to be committed and what it sets in motion.

Deriving it from the classical notion of *qurba* (closeness to God), Taha gives this quest the name of *samʿī-qurbānī*, an integral attribute of guided reason. The combined concept brings together the two necessary conditions of theoretical-epistemic attainment and practice-based propinquity, *the latter being clearly absent from denuded reason.* It is precisely here where guided reason acquires an edge over its denuded counterpart.

Yet, despite the full range of safeguards afforded by guided reason, it remains true that it is no more protected from the lurking dangers encountering denuded reason. It is, in fact, the very aspect of *sharʿī* praxis that is particularly vulnerable to at least two causes of corruption that can eviscerate it of its real meaning and function. Echoing an extensive tradition within quasi-legal writings in premodern Islam, including the notable *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn* by Ghazālī,[28] Taha speaks of the corrupting elements of pretension (*taẓāhur*) and unthinking conformity (*taqlīd*). Pretension may encompass

a range of eviscerating and deleterious practices, including excessive per-formance without genuine dedication to the inner "soul" of action and praxis, this being a double infraction because it lacks sincerity and involves, in addition, an excess that amounts to lying. Feigned excess does not only presuppose deceitfulness but is also intended to attain social benefits, both of which amount to depriving the act of the required degree of sincerity. Absence of sincerity and socially interested but excessive praxis also lead the agent to overestimate her own piety and attitude and, at the same time, to underrate those of others. This self-righteousness is merely the beginning of an unhealthy attitude that culminates in judging others as less pious, even accusing them of disbelief, a move that runs counter to everything that reli-gion prescribes (*AD*, 79–83).[29]

The second cause of corruption is *taqlīd*, which has three forms, the first consisting in the commissioning of an act on the basis of someone else's the-oretical knowledge without a proof of the validity of this knowledge. A sec-ond form of *taqlīd* occurs when the theoretical (*naẓarī*) grounds of the prin-ciple of action are within the agent's reach, but are bereft of the praxis-based grounds—a situation that places this *taqlīd* within the confines, and thus shortcomings, of denuded reason. Finally, the third form is what might be called ordinary *taqlīd* (*taqlīd ʿādī*), a practice that ceases to be intentional and has thus no particular purpose, having been degraded into a ritualistic affair, performed as an ordinary custom (*AD*, 83–89).[30] This latter consideration amounts to a critique leveled at those who equate the religious works of the *ʿibādāt* with ritualistic, mechanical performance. By Taha's measure these *ʿibādāt* are nothing when reduced to ritualistic performance.

IV

Enhanced reason (*al-ʿaql al-muʾayyad*)[31] represents acts whose owner seeks to know things in themselves, i.e., what makes them what they are, by delving into the entire range of *sharʿī* praxis and works, including optional practices, in addition to performing those acts that are mandatory, in the most com-plete fashion (*AD*, 121). If there is any point to introducing a thicker mean-ing to *ʿibāda*, it is to militate, in the most systematic and psychoepistemic of ways, against any ritualistic practices routinely but erroneously attributed to the field of praxis.

Whereas denuded reason seeks to comprehend the apparent attributes of things, or their descriptions (*rusūm*),[32] and whereas guided reason aims to comprehend phenomena insofar as their praxis and external actions are concerned,[33] enhanced reason seeks to attain all these descriptions and practices *in addition to the inner attributes and inner actions of things*, namely, their essences (*dhawāt*) or identity (*huwiyya*), defined as that which makes a thing what it is (*mā bi-hi yakūn al-shay' huwa huwa*). Neither reason alone nor praxis alone can be the proper means or venue to this comprehension, but rather by means of them both, together, combined with experience (*tajriba*). To understand the differences between and among the three types, consider a person who says: "I know from so-and-so about such-and-such, because I have heard this about him." This is theoretical knowledge of apparent qualities. But if that person says, "I deal with so-and-so because I benefit from him in regard to X matter," then this represents practical, experiential knowledge of external acts that are intended to bring benefit and avoid harm. On the other hand, if he says, "I like/love so-and-so because he feels the same about me," then this person experiences an internal, living knowledge (*maʿrifa ḥayya*) that can aid him in attaining cognition of external attributes and actions by means of *internal attributes and internal acts and states*.

Taha calls this third type "living practical knowledge" (*al-naẓar al-ʿamalī al-ḥayy*) *al-mulābasa*, a term apparently derived from Abū al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmirī's language in *al-Iʿlām bi-Manāqib al-Islām* (AD, 122).[34] For our purposes, and in the meantime, we will assume this term to be a mere acronym, standing for a combination of two elements, namely, (a) the practical bent of guided reason as it is, and (b) this practical bent as best united with living experience, the latter being an addition that moves *mulāmasa*, in a categorically psycho-epistemic manner, into the realm of enhanced reason. The addition is not an arithmetical operation; rather, it is a progressive and reflective engagement that has an equivalent in the power of growth animating living things. The effects of this experience penetrate deep into the very processes and functions of praxis and action, that is, into the psychoepistemic self. Enhanced reason thus encompasses an inner psychological dimension, whereby the knowledge of attributes attained by abstracted reason and of acts attained by guided reason is augmented by a knowledge of essential qualities. This latter knowledge goes deep into the reality of things to engender an internal knowledge that emits its effects onto external attitudes and actions.

This brief account of enhanced reason suffices for us to draw the conclusion that Taha's tripartite typology of reason is intended to capture the differences (as well as incremental commonalities), respectively, between and among the modern conception of reason, the premodern *sharʿī* synthesis of reason and revelation, and the *ṣūfī* forms of knowledge. In other words, the typology corresponds to what are at present modern, traditional *sharʿī* and *ṣūfī* practices of rationality, assuming that the second and third can be categorized as necessarily differentiated fields (a point to be raised later).

However, Taha does not state the matter in these terms, although he does devote to the matter a substantial section in which he argues that, of all Islamic rational practices, enhanced reason acquires its most perfect form in the *ṣūfī* arena (*AD*, 146–56). Clearly associated with Ṣūfism, enhanced reason travels a considerable distance toward perfecting rational reality, since it cultivates in the individual a special capacity to avoid certain character faults, such as lack of humility, love of appearances, unthinking conformism, indulging in (useless) abstractions, engaging in politics (*tasyīs*), and love for domination and mastery.[35] Which is also to say that by developing this tripartite account of reason, Taha not only has leveled a trenchant critique of Jābrī's portrayal of the *bayānī* and *ʿirfānī* "epistemic regimes," but can also be said to have cut down Jābrī's central claims.

Taha's feat, then, is achieved by anchoring reason in both these domains right in the midst of praxis, in habituation, embodiment, and a profound technology of the soul. All Jābrī seems to see in these two regimes is their outer and surface layers of reason, but cannot appreciate that these praxis-based technologies are powerful performatives of a subject fully grounded in robust conceptions of positive liberty. This, I think, is the final and highest measure against which an assessment of the two thinkers ought to rest.

The struggle between Taha and Jābrī is not so much about "forms of rationality" for their own sake. Rather, it is about the most profound and encompassing conception of reality, one that defines all of the structures, teleologies, and values of what I have been calling central domains. It is, at the end of the day, the crucial struggle over the two "concepts of liberty," not just as defined in the Berlinian and liberal ways, but one that is engulfed—in the Tahan-Jābiriyyan debate—by the oceanic weight of twelve centuries of Islamic experience prior to colonialism, which has come down to us by the name of *turāth*. "Oceanic weight" because so-called positive liberty in this

experience transcends, as I will argue in the epilogue, even an amplified conception of its Berlinian counterpart.[36]

Enhanced reason, embodying what I take to be the deeper thrusts of an Islamic conception of positive liberty, must fulfill, in Taha's thinking, three conditions in order to reach the higher stages of perfection. First, knowledge must be concomitant with praxis, whereby the maxim "knowledge is the founding principle of praxis and praxis is the perfected completion of knowledge" acquires the status of truth. No rational knowledge can reach perfection without moving, or transposing itself, from the level of abstraction to the level of ethical behavior. Praxis qua praxis possesses a generative epistemic and heuristic value. This is the case even in the linguistic, logical, or exact sciences, since, without the antidote of enhanced reason, these are liable to be placed, as they indeed were, in the service of unethical conduct (think of Nazism). Thus, it is imperative to undertake an evaluation of scholarship and writings on Islamic subjects with an eye to streamlining them according to this principle. *A work of scholarship would have no useful purpose, and thus must be rejected, if it does not establish itself as meaningfully relevant to practical ethics.*[37]

Second, every intellectual project or field of inquiry, to be complete and mature, must seek a way toward knowing God as much as it is the desideratum of that project or inquiry to establish truths within the field in which it situates itself. This is because all objects of inquiry are, in the final analysis, integral to God's creation and an expression of his creative works. The advocates of denuded reason have shunned this connection, at the price of incurring upon themselves much harm and devastation. Taha does not explicitly specify this harm, but he must surely be thinking of the modern destruction of the natural habitat, the fragmentation of the social order, the depletion of meaning and the consequent harm to the psyche, genocide, hegemony, and much else.[38] Be that as it may, his point appears to amount to the following argument: the study of existence, which is what we in effect do and claim to be doing, must reckon with the fact that its object of inquiry represents a wholesome and integrated unity that we must treat with sacred respect. The ways of unraveling the workings of this ontological unity must constantly be aware of the integrity and sacredness of this object.

Third, rational practices of enhanced reason must always allow for epistemic expansion, since its ceaseless and penetrating inquiry (*ijtihād*) into

praxis ineluctably engenders an attachment to guiding values and instructive and constructive meanings that ultimately yield benefit and avoid harm, both of which are defined in ethical terms. Taha here is emphasizing that any searching inquiry in enhanced reason is nearly boundless within the domain of subjective moral rationality, which infuses into the amalgam of denuded and guided reason a deeply psychological ingredient and a committed practical ethics. He is perhaps taking his argument even further: liberal inquiries may well be horizontally varied and staggeringly expansive, but none of them entails the conclusion that they manage to fulfill this third condition, simply because they fail on account of the first two conditions.

These three conditions find their complete fulfillment in *ṣūfī* practices, representing the achievements of enhanced reason. In Taha's estimation, denuded and guided reasons remain, even aggregately, incomplete, and thus inadequate to the life of a Muslim (as it has been effectively defined and shaped by a millennium of actual experience and ways of living in the world). Of course this leaves open the question of what constitutes "*ṣūfī* practices" in his thought, a question he does not shy away from answering, albeit with relative brevity.

In the construction of moral character in accordance with enhanced reason two principles must hold, being together an antidote to the morally objectionable phenomenon of politicization.[39] The first is the integrity of the link between the ethically exemplary figures of the past (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*) and contemporary moral engagement. This link, we recall, belongs to not linear but ethical time, in which causality and historiographical facts are irrelevant. The second principle, moral accomplishment (*taḥṣīl*), demands an ethical embodiment after the examples of these figures. In chapter 6, we will see that Taha launches a biting critique of the political Islamists, and goes to great lengths in pitting this kind of ethical *salafī* embodiment against their concepts of politics and "religion." He rejects the modern *salafī* incarnation as both textualist and given to politicization (*tasyīsī*) rather than a genuinely ethical or ethicizing movement (*takhlīqī*). As a general rule, modern Salafism focuses on the texts (and, one might even say, on the text without context), not their moral content, and rejects the exemplarity of past models by passing judgment on them (*yaḥkum ʿalā al-rijāl*), instead of setting them up as moral exemplars, as expressions of ethical, rather than linear, time. Thus the difference is that modern Salafism navigates its way through the

written word (*ʿibāra*), whereas the *takhlīq* of enhanced reason entirely relies on the moral semiotics (*ishāra*) of past exemplars (*AD*, 185). In order to distinguish ethical from the politicized Salafism, Taha gives it the name *tasalluf*, a kind of Salafism that peruses the texts with an eye to delving into praxis, so as to extract from the texts their moral content. He recognizes that the texts are removed from our lives by a long stretch of history and that, as a result, changes in the interim require us to provide new readings of the texts. Yet, the readings do not require a direct or close study of these texts, for these should be seen as guides to renewing the *mutasallif*'s education.[40]

In his *Suʾāl al-Akhlāq*, Taha takes stock of what should constitute a definition of rationality, irrespective of the intellectual position adopted. Any definition must include three criteria or standards (*maʿāyīr*). The first of these is actionism (*fāʿiliyya*). To be dissociated from earlier uses (Weber's, Alain Touraine's), this concept refers to the individual's realization of herself through praxis, one that ranges over the entire spectrum of her life experience and that, in the process, defines the identity of her overall conduct as a human being. By necessity, then, these praxes must be varied, first, in their intentions and motives and, second, in their quality and methods of implementation. And third, they must perforce be subject to the vicissitudes of time and place (*SA*, 61–62). Hence, certain forms of actionism would be effective and successful, while others would be deficient (*SA*, 64).

The second criterion is *miʿyār al-taqwīm*, which may be translated as "valuative ennoblement," the constant and never-ceasing search for higher values, a process whose goal is to attain the highest state of perfection possible. This is almost identical to what I have elsewhere called the "ethical benchmark."[41] The third criterion is the criterion of integral complementarity (*miʿyār al-takāmul*). The various parts and aspects of human behavior are not separable and fragmented entities, where one act may be assigned to a sphere unrelated to the other spheres in the life of the individual. To the contrary, every aspect or act is related to every other, for they all stem from one self or subjectivity (*dhāt wāḥida*), which combines attributes of weakness and strength, knowledge and practice, and emotional and cerebral knowledge.

With this cursory mapping of rationality, Taha wants to subject both the Aristotelian and the Cartesian conceptions of reason to critique. The former

exercised influence on premodern Muslim thinkers, whereas the latter has become paradigmatic in modern conceptions of rationality, in the West to be sure, but no less in today's Muslim world (*SA*, 62).

Aristotle regarded reason as the quiddity of humanity, an essential attribute that distinguishes man from animal. His definition then clearly does not meet the first and third standards (actionism and integral complementarity), although to a rather limited extent it does conform to the second. The definition of reason as essence makes it a sort of substitute for the self (*dhāt*), when in fact reason *is an act and a mode of conduct*.[42] It is integral to all human actions: a person reasons through his sense perception of sight, as he does when he exercises the faculty of hearing. Reason can thus be judged as good or bad: it is good when it is put to good actions, and vice versa. Thus, it changes with the change of modes of conduct in which it is embedded, and may transform itself from one intellectual quality into another. The Aristotelian definition has the additional effect of dividing the human into distinct and autonomous components, since making rationality an essence of humanity leads to a fragmented view of the human subject who also possesses the essential attributes of action and experiential knowledge, among others. On the other hand, while the Aristotelian tradition attended to evaluative ennoblement, it did not take it in the right direction, because the values that it upheld as necessary for the perfection of man cannot be said to ensure that they will not be converted to their opposites, resulting in harm when they were intended to accomplish the good. "Evidence of this is their doctrine of the Ten Intellects, which were assigned the status of gods" (*SA*, 63, 65).[43]

Cartesian rationality, on the other hand, sees itself as defined by the scientific method, especially the logical and mathematical. Yet, while this method makes a claim to universal scientific laws and a common form of rationality, it consists in reality of irreconcilable theories that differ in their fundamental assumptions and approaches, as attested, inter alia, in the theories of relativity and absolute space. The multiplicity and incompatible plurality of these scientific methods make it impossible to reach a coherent and unified rational method, leaving us with a bewildering relativism. This in turn makes it impossible to fulfill the criterion of valuative ennoblement, since an objective standard of what this consists of cannot be agreed on, making the search for and attainment of values of the good life altogether impossible.

Concomitant with relativism comes chaos (*fawḍawiyya*). Exhibiting contradiction in assumptions, methods, and theories, modern science does not build a unified vision of the world and good life, but represents a series of breaks, where one theory or paradigm contradicts or refutes the other, this being exemplified by the narrative of divine creation vs. evolutionism, rational mechanics vs. quantum mechanics, and the Einsteinian theory vs. the Newtonian one. Needless to say, all this is a tacit reference to the Kuhnian thesis of paradigm shifts, but for Taha the ethical implications of this commonly accepted thesis are far graver than what has been made of it. While for immediate practical and material living this intellectual chaos may not matter, it certainly has adverse effects on an ethical view of the world, in which truth, especially that of value, is relative and even confused. As important, the claim that scientific rationality leads to an ordered and holistic view of the world is groundless (*SA*, 66).

Cartesian scientific reason has furthermore developed in such intensely technical ways that it has ended up containing and controlling human life, in the process enslaving humanity under the guise of the rhetoric of freedom and liberation, desiderata that turned into their opposites. Here, Taha does not feel the need to belabor the point, for Weber, Ellul, and many others have forcefully expounded such themes in enduring critiques of their own. The human enslavement by autonomous logic and the operation of what Ellul called *technique* has led to the irrational principle that everything is possible, which in turn has resulted in the unethical precept that what can be done must be done. And since methods of technique tend to lift any and all constraints that ought to shape, direct, and control behavior, the mission of freeing humanity and leading it to happiness has failed to constitute itself as a real and practical goal (*maqṣad ḥaqīqī wa-fiʿlī*; *SA*, 66).

Scientific rationality is furthermore plagued by a number of adverse characteristics. First, it makes a pretense to objectivity by saturating its discourse with its penchant to purify its methods from subjective value and subjective meaning. It purports to limit itself to dispassionate observation and sense experience, where religious meaning and ethical values are regarded as obstacles standing in the way of pure objectivity. In truth, however, all this rational practice does is displace and substitute religious meanings with its own secular and nonethical notions, including the concept of objectivity itself. Second, scientific rationalism exhibits a stubborn insistence on exteriority (*al-jumūd ʿalā al-ẓāhir*), whereby a thing is made

equivalent to its representation and appearance. Yet, it is only through locating things in space and time that they can be transformed into phenomena, which is to say that modern scientific rationality neglects the inner truths of things (*al-ḥaqāʾiq al-bāṭina*), which cannot be reduced to quantification, measurement, or experiential analysis. This partial view of the world surely cannot and does not guarantee the attainment of true benefit that leads to the good life, which explains why this rationality, while intending to improve the lot of humanity, ends up causing much harm in practice.

The third characteristic of scientific rationality is that of successive means. Since knowledge of things in the world is constructed through a series of analytical and argumentative intermediaries (*waṣāʾit*) that successively build on one another, the more complex the phenomenon to be explained, the more numerous and extensive become the means to comprehend it. And since spiritual phenomena are complex and finely nuanced, materialist analytical means (the only kind that scientific rationality knows) are inevitably both insufficient and inadequate, thereby missing those crucial aspects of reality that lead to true benefit.

Since both Aristotelian and Cartesian rational methods are deficient in the articulation and application of reason's criteria, "we have good reason to regard them as standing at a lower grade of rationality that we have called 'denuded rationality' " (*SA*, 68). Denuded reason is precisely that which is devoid of certitude both in the theoretical benefit of the goals it articulates and in the actual means by which these goals can be achieved. Hence the tremendous harm that it has managed to cause!

Accordingly, an exit from denuded reason requires the introduction of what Taha calls praxis-values (*qiyam ʿamaliyya*), since praxis enriches and fortifies what would otherwise remain limited to denuded rationality. Here, valuative ennoblement is key, due to the fact that it encompasses two characteristics. First, it abides by higher principles. If principles qua principles have any value, it is because they are not subject to whimsical or willful change. Second, representing the ultimate goals (*maqāṣid*), valuative ennoblement must be universal in the sense that it is not subject to individual variation or will. Rather, it is collective and communal, shared by social individuals as groups or as members of a group. Yet, the means to achieve valuative ennoblement—which go under the heading of actionism—tolerate a wide range of variation and particularity, for while the higher values and principles are fixed, the means to them may be countless and varied (*SA*,

69–71). Yet, an intimate relationship must always exist between varied means and higher principles, which is also to say that the latter must, at every turn, be brought to bear upon the former. In nondenuded rationality, theory and practice, speech and act, knowledge and action are woven together, one being coexistent and coextensive with the other. If the higher values and principles are ethical, and if the means to them, however varied, always connect back to them and strive to serve them and bolster their meanings in the soul, then the entire mode of existence would be grounded in enhanced rationality (ʿaqlāniyya muʾayyada), which religion, but not secularism, could offer. Unity between principles and praxis, between means and ends, between speech and act, and between theory and practice all are essential ingredients of this rationality, a type of rationality that avoids the fragmentation and shortcomings of its denuded counterpart.[44]

Religion, Secularism, Ethics

A Concept of Critique

I

Evidently destructive and prone to serious error and endemic uncertainty, modern rationality can hardly be deemed the quiddity of humanity, as the moderns have come to believe. The essence of humanity and that which separates humans from animals are rather the attribute of ethics (*al-akhlāqiyya*), a quality from which all characteristics of the humans qua humans, including rationality, derive (*SA*, 14).[1] It is ethics, not rationality, that distinguishes the human from the animal, for the latter does enjoy a rational faculty, however inferior it is to man's.[2] It follows then, Taha tells us, that there are two major types of rationality, one devoid of ethical content, and thus shared by man and animal, and another that is guided (*musaddad*) by ethics and is uniquely characteristic of humans, making them what they are.[3]

Yet the modernists reject such a division, insisting on denuded reason as the form that drives modern thinking about the world. A survey of modernity's schools of ethics (Intuitionism, Naturalism, Absolutism, Relativism, and so on) reveals what Taha calls "intellectual chaos" (*fawḍā fikriyya*) that has plagued Western moral philosophy. Each school claims to have arrived at its ethical doctrine exclusively through rational methods, but this very multiplicity of claims to rationality is the most evincive demonstration of their incoherence. The incoherence stems from the fact that, as products of

the same modern place and time, these schools with their diverse doctrines not only cannot all be true individually; they must stand in their totality as a mass of contradictions. Yet, contradiction and incoherence are, by virtue of these modernists' own acknowledgment and insistence, the very stuff of irrationality.[4] In order to escape this dilemma, they must each, in turn, admit that their form of rationality is merely one of many, and that these rationalities are by no means exhaustive, leaving the distinct possibility that there are other ways of rationalizing the world that they have not considered (*SA*, 16).

Having marshaled a list of general critiques of modern Western moral philosophy (*SA*, 15–25) that focus especially on Kant's works, Taha insists on two fundamental considerations. First, modernity has elaborated a "shallow morality" (*akhlāqiyyāt al-saṭḥ*) intended to avert the detrimental effects of its own projects (*SA*, 145). Put differently, this morality is not only the direct result of the modern operations on the world, but also a manifestation of modernity's own conceptions and logic in the construction of solutions to the problems it had created. "Modernity cannot create values and meanings unless they are of the same species as those (governing its) realities and pehonomena."[5] And if solutions are made of the same structure that itself caused the problem in the first place, then the harm the solutions attempt to avert or remedy will continue to reside in—in fact infest—the solutions themselves. A genuine and real solution to modernity's problems cannot therefore ensue from the structures of modernity itself. They must both be external to it and have a superior potency that is able to supersede the potency of modernity and its anemic solutions. Any proposed solutions must go deeper than those that have come before, and must "dive into the depths of life as well as the innermost dimensions of the human self" (*SA*, 26, 145–46).

Second, and issuing from the former consideration, is the central idea that the solutions to the modern project must find their sources in forms of rationality that lay outside the denuded forms that modernity developed and adopted, after it had ostracized other forms. One such form, which Muslims are entitled to advocate inasmuch as others are entitled to adopt their own forms, is enhanced rationality, which insists on the fundamental and foregrounding proposition that there is no ethical life without religion and no religion without ethics. In this context as in countless others, Taha avers the most obvious yet unaccepted claim, that if the modernists, Arabs included,

allow themselves to critique the religious through that which is nonreligious (= secular), then it is the right of the interlocutor or adversary to critique that which is secular or antireligious through what is religious. "If they allow the critique of Islamic ethics by means of the secular modern, then why is it not allowed for others to critique the secular modern by means of Islamic ethics?" (*SA*, 26). It needs no emphasis that the illiberal straightjacketing of the religious in modernist and liberal tendencies never ceases to be a source of complaint by our philosopher.

<div align="center">II</div>

Constrained as it is, modern rationality not only precluded a robust critique of secularism through autonomous religious positions but also has utterly failed to address the full range of relationship between religion and ethics. It is an examination of this relationship that begins to shed light on the narrowness of denuded reason, on the one hand, and the expansiveness and inclusiveness of enhanced rationality, on the other. Singularly able to take religion seriously, the latter rationality views the relationship from numerous vintage points, including the complex historical, psychological, social, logical, epistemological, and ontological connections between the two (*SA*, 30). What concerned modern Western philosophers in all these connections was the rather limited preoccupation with such questions as which of the two directs or controls the other, which derives from the other, that is, whether religion constitutes the foundation of ethics, on which the latter rests, or the other way around.[6] Or, still, are they separate from each other, existing as autonomous spheres that do not derive from, or prop, each other? The "philosophers" thus probed three possible modes in this relationship: subordination of ethics to religion, subordination of religion to ethics, and intrinsic independence of one from the other.

Advocated in early and middle Christianity by such major figures as Augustine and Aquinas, the first mode seems at least roughly consistent with Taha's position. His objections in this context are directed against those who denied the subordination of ethics to religion on various grounds, chief among them being the introduction into the debate of the so-called Euthyphro Dilemma.[7] Limiting his reply to the general argument that only a denuded form of reason can take the Dilemma to be a genuine philosophical

problem (*SA*, 35), he quickly moves on to attack the second mode, that religion is subordinate to ethics.

His chief target here is Kant, whose concepts of legislating will and the Categorical Imperative are dismissed, and rightly so, as secularized versions of Christian doctrine. Such objections are by now familiar, having been made in forceful ways by philosophers such as G. E. M. Anscombe, who showed that Kant's notion of duty is little more than a Christian intrusion, a leftover from religious Europe that was surreptitiously allowed to wear an Enlightenment garb of reason within his recycled notion of the Categorical Imperative.[8] Kant's method, Taha argues, is to use religion in order to suppress it through a humanizing process, this latter involving a double-pronged operation of substitution and analogy. Kant substitutes the concept of reason for the concept of faith (*īmān*), the concept of human will for that of divine will, the Categorical Imperative for divine command, human self-legislating will for divinely ordained law, and the concept of Kingdom of Ends for Paradise.

In Kant's work, the suppression of religion through analogy took the form of introducing secular equivalents to religious notions. As the source of ethics, pure reason is derived analogically from revealed religion, so that humans can now legislate for themselves as autonomous agents. And just as "divine legislation" is intended to enact laws that would govern humanity in its entirety, so is human legislation intended to be universal (*SA*, 39–40). "There is no doubt that Kant constructed his secular theory of ethics on religious foundations, having, by means of substitution, manipulated these foundations so that the human displaces God; then, he analogized the rules of the former on the basis of the latter. This theory is secular only in appearance" (*SA*, 40). The only difference between the two is that the human has now been installed as the ultimate source of authority. If this is accepted, then it necessarily follows that Kant's claim that ethics subordinates religion is invalid. It would also follow that secular ethics is nothing other than religious ethics in disguise (*mutanakkir*), making the proposition that ethics subordinates religion false.[9]

The third mode in the relationship between ethics and religion is their autonomy and separation from each other. The claim for separation derives from the central philosophical doctrine, initially propounded by Hume, that Is and Ought are distinct logical propositions, making it logically impossible to derive the latter from the former. The doctrine's effect has been to

carve out, in the Western application, an autonomous sphere for ethics, thus isolating it altogether (especially in G. E. Moore's system) from naturalistic domains of knowledge. In his famous passage on the issue,[10] Hume makes a distinction between propositions that pertain to transcendental domains and propositions that relate to human beings, this being a move that aims to separate religious matters from other affairs of the human world, where religion is no longer associated with moral judgments. It is one thing for a proposition to speak of transcendental affairs and another for it to express sensory knowledge. The latter is no more informative of the former than the former of the latter. They are not only separate; there cannot be an instance in which religious propositions can provide the basis for ethical knowledge.

There are, Taha argues, a number of objections that can be made against the Humean conclusions, which have become central to modernity's thinking about religion and secularism.[11] First, the separation between the religious and the ethical rests on a skewed and highly constrained understanding of "religion," because (1) it relegates the latter to the status of theory that rests on a set of enunciative judgments (*aḥkām khabariyya*), and (2) it reduces religious rules to mere suppositions formulated by man to explain his experience in the world due to his failure to grasp the natural causes of things. Yet the failure lies in the inability of Hume and his likes to understand that religion is more akin to social structures and quasi-institutional setups (*ashbah bil-mu'assasa*). It is a set of rules and norms that, in addition to being enunciative judgments, also define behavior, praxis, and certain modes of living in the world, because these fulfill concrete and particular needs. They define the relationships between social and worldly existents, attending first and foremost to the need to garner benefit and to avoid harm. And since deontological propositions and propositional imperatives are necessarily ethical in nature, religion, which these propositions conceptually formulate, is as much ethical as it is enunciative (*SA*, 44).

Furthermore, ethics may subordinate religious enunciative propositions in that the latter's effects may be deontological and duty-inducing, effectively amounting to propositional commands that require performance, whether it be a commission or omission of an act. In other words, it is not always the apparent meaning of an enunciative proposition, but rather its *performative value* that is relevant and most important. In the proposition "God commands me to do such-and-such," it is not the actual event that God

has commanded that is the most interesting or significant, for the relevance is not limited to the test of truth-value verification. For the believer, the enunciative value is of secondary importance at best, because for her it is neither an epistemological nor an ontological proposition: there is no question of the truth or falsehood of the proposition, nor is there a question as to the existence or non-existence of the agent as the source of that proposition. Rather, Taha argues, the command inherent in the proposition—that such and such must or must not be performed—is taken reflexively, transforming the command from a second-person instruction into a first-person sense of duty. Thus, "God commands me to do such-and-such" is metamorphosed in the mind of the believer into "I should do such-and-such." The proposition has in it the inherent power to transform itself from enunciation to praxis, one having an ethical thrust of the first order. Which is also to say that this type of proposition establishes a necessary relationship (ʿalāqa ḍarūriyya) between command and performance. However, if it were taken to be merely enunciative, the relationship would remain probable, lacking, strictly speaking, logical concomitance (*SA*, 45).

Thus, the very statement "God commands me to do such-and-such" possesses the very same meaning inherent in the statement "God makes it obligatory that I do such-and-such." There exists neither an intermediary stage of inference nor a middle term between the two propositions. Uttering the one would be identical to uttering the other, or at best, one would constitute an exegesis or explanation of the other. The subjectivity involved in the apprehension of the linguistic and conceptual range of such propositions renders Hume's Law not only arbitrary but also insufficiently inclusive, since it fails to account for the full implications of linguistic structures.

Second, Hume is also wrong in driving a wedge between religion and ethics and in claiming that ethics derives its values from moral sentiments, feelings of approval and disapproval—e.g., esteem, praise, blame—in spectators who contemplate a person's character or action. He distinguished between moral sentiment and reason, arguing that the latter is the slave of passion, that it alone can be neither a motive to the will nor the source of ethics.[12]

Yet, Hume's notion of moral sentiment finds identical parallels in religious conceptions (*SA*, 45–46). The Islamic concept of *fiṭra*, for instance, is not much different from Hume's idea of moral sentiment. In this tradition, *fiṭra* has come to denote an ethical feeling, a moral sentiment with which humans

are born. It is not a cultivable trait, nourished by upbringing or education, but a naturally ingrained instinct that has the competence to evaluate theoretical and practical affairs of the world.[13] Therefore, one of two possibilities must be true: Hume borrowed this concept from the religious tradition either deliberately or nondeliberately. A conscious and deliberate borrowing is likely because Hume was deeply interested in religion as a philosophical matter, and in fact "devoted to it two exquisite treatises," *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* and *The Natural History of Religion*. His idea of "moral sentiment" was apparently a way for him to escape transcendentalism in favor of empiricism, consistent with the generally secularizing movement in Europe that goes by the name of Enlightenment. On the other hand, he may have been indirectly influenced by contemporaneous writings on religion, writings that reacted to philosophical ventures which claimed that selfish interests and self-love drive human behavior, as exhibited most famously in Hobbes and Bernard Mandeville.[14] Hume, Taha reminds us, was intimately familiar with the works of A. A. C. Shaftesbury, Joseph Butler, and Francis Hutcheson, whom he called the "philosophers of moral sentiment" (*SA*, 47). In the case of Butler, for instance, he clearly read and expressed admiration for his writings, and so he is likely to have been indirectly influenced by Butler's well-elaborated concept of moral sentiment. Thus, both the substance and the means of influence or borrowing confirm the religious origins of Hume's secularized concept (*SA*, 47).

Third, enunciative propositions cannot be disentangled or distinguished from ethical value, first, because there is no agreement whatever on this distinction among intellectuals discoursing on the issue and, second, because the distinction or lack of it depends on our worldview, assumptions, and method. Various conceptions of rationality and objectivity lead to different views of the matter, blurring the lines of separation between Fact and Value. Furthermore, our descriptive language, our narrative, of what is a fact varies among groups and individuals according to their circumstances and conditions of life, to such a degree that only a particular way of seeing things predetermines the results, but these are results we have *already* sought to reach (*SA*, 48).

In its general outline, Taha's argument about the subjectivity of the split between Is and Ought, and between Fact and Value, comports with Charles Taylor's and Alasdair MacIntyre's critiques of Enlightenment discourse on the matter, a discourse that has in their view gained the status of a

metaethic. The split "does not stand as a timeless truth. . . . It makes sense only within certain ethical outlooks."[15] Like much else in modernity, it was made to be a sort of timeless and universal truth designed to "outrageously fix the rules of discourse in the interests of one outlook, forcing rival views into incoherence."[16] Like Taha, both philosophers have advocated the contingent, contextual nature of the split, arguing not only for the possibility that the distinction may altogether be false in the first place, but also that—even if we grant it any validity—there is no moral reasoning that can "do without modes of thinking that the split rules out."[17] This in effect amounts to saying, as Taha repeatedly insists, that moral thinking and the fixing of moral values and ethical considerations in modernity's worldview cannot be achieved while maintaining the split. Another, eminently defensible "outlook" would be to view enunciative propositions in religion as fully capable of combining Fact and Value, if not being wholly made of Value (*SA*, 50).

As is the case with the Is/Ought distinction, the purpose of enunciative propositions in religion is not so much to affirm or deny a predicate's relationship to a subject, but rather to urge reflection *through* the information conveyed. In other words, these propositions, more frequently than not, do not constitute statements about a thing in particular, but rather instruct about similar matters or themes *contained* in the propositions. What is significant in these propositions is not their factual content but the allusive power embedded in them, which in addition conveys the intention of the proposition's author. Here formal logical analysis of statements fails, for the author's status, power, or charisma determines the significance and extent of the gripping power of the contents. In fact, the meaning of propositions in good part lies in their power to "indicate" or "signify" their authors, for the more a proposition "signifies" its author, the clearer the intention of the language of that proposition, and thus the strength or weakness of its content (*SA*, 49).

It is a narrow modality of reasoning to think of religious propositions as amenable to the tests of science and theoretical knowledge, for religion was never intended to teach people how to calculate and measure reality, study it, and subject it to various tests of truth. The major function of religious propositions is to guide people in the use of science, scientific instruments, and ways of studying the world. Science and its instruments and methods are open-ended spheres, amenable to every possible way of conduct. The

very same scientific method, discovery, or invention can be used in vastly different ways, and for very different, even opposing, ends. Taha could have easily argued that science can attain sophisticated heights in order to unravel the majesty of creation qua creation (a project whose teleology is wholly made of ethical fiber), or that it can attain even higher heights in order to decimate entire populations and destroy the Earth—both possibilities reflecting the difference between, say, the Islamic science of premodernity and modern science. There is nothing essential in science that dictates its use in a particular way. The very same science can be bad or good, and it is the religious foregrounding, which is value-laden, that directs scientific and theoretical knowledge. It is about achieving the best possible good in life (*SA*, 49).

Revising Taha, one could of course assert that while a considerable body of science lends itself to his generalization—namely, the same science can be harnessed for different, even opposing ends—not all modern science can be legitimately subsumed under his categorical proposition. Much of science is inherently conceived from within a distinctly amoral, even unethical outlook. It is eminently arguable that the raison d'être of certain sciences and fields of knowledge is structurally and logically predicated on legalized notions of destruction, expropriation, or violence, all of which are subordinates to a global and expansive notion of colonialism. As I argued in *Restating Orientalism*, a whole range of academic disciplines is implicated in what I have called there a structural genocide, a notion that transcends its ordinary but constrained counterpart. One could also speak of the instructive field of astrophysics, which replicates, as a "genetic slice,"[18] the structures of all other fields of modern academia. Instructive, because this field, among several others, had a robust and vigorous equivalent in premodern Islam (generally labeled astronomy), where it was *scientifically* developed within a cosmology that aimed to unravel the secrets of the universe as an intelligent theistic design.[19] Modern astrophysics, by contrast, is structured by a logic of colonization, one that aims to "understand" the world with the ambition of mastery and control. It is not a minor detail that one of the ambitions of modern astrophysics is to discover a planet similar to Earth, inhabitable and thus colonizable.[20] The conceptual structure of this project thus operates on the fundamental modern dogma of instrumentalism, a project in whose inner layers hides

the assumption that Earth is disposable, like almost everything else in the modern theology of capitalism and its consumerism.

<div style="text-align:center">III</div>

Taha's critique is not limited to Western modernity and its problematic application of Enlightenment spirit. The critique travels back to premodern Islamic intellectual history. He denounces the theological schools of the Ashʿarīs and Muʿtazila for succumbing too easily to Greek categories and specifically rejects their ordering of Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa, the universal aims and goals of the "law." Muslim theologians and jurists who followed these schools are said to have relegated ethics to a position subsidiary to "religion," advancing instead material interests over ethical considerations. "But is there anything in the affairs of man that is more indicative of his humanity than his ethical affairs?. . . Religion and ethics are one and the same; there is no religion without ethics and there is no ethics without religion" (*SA*, 52).

Yet, for this claim to be properly understood, "we must rid ourselves of certain popular beliefs about religion and ethics" (*SA*, 52). The first belief is that the main function of religion is to keep up rituals. There is little doubt that every religion requires a regular performance of ritual (*adāʾ al-shaʿāʾir*) but to say that these are necessary for their own sake is to misunderstand the true meaning and purposes of religion. The effects of rituals are to transform the soul into a better state of being, one that cultivates a moral technology for the soul's health. What counts in ritual, in other words, are the effects and not the actual performances, whether these are apparent or hidden, whether they are lodged in the soul or exhibit themselves externally as acts of worship.[21] Performance is thus the means to a higher end, and it is intelligible only by virtue of that end. It follows, then, that the highest desideratum of ritual is the cultivation of morals, where every ritual is intimately connected with, and fully undergirds, an ethical value. The concomitance is such that the higher the degree and quality of performing works, the firmer the entrenchment of the ethical value.

Second is the misconception that ethics is a complementary or super-added quality, one that is appended to the individual's identity, say, as

citizen. Here, Taha seems at one with Iris Murdoch, who averred that the modern individual's ethical constitution is not made by the state, since the state does not seek to make him "good."[22] But Taha goes considerably further: Ethics is neither a complementary quality nor a luxury, but *integral to the very constitution of the subject as a human*; it is, let us recall, constitutive of the quiddity of humanity, defining the identity of the human and of humanity, all at once.[23] "The existence of the human is not prior to ethics, but concomitant with it" (*SA*, 54). This virtual maxim, one might categorically state, represents the most persistent and fundamental thesis of our thinker, consistent with his claim that the essence of humanity is not rationality but ethics. In late modernity, this is clearly a novel philosophical position, of which Taha is fully aware.

The third belief that must be dispelled, following from the second, is the identification of ethics as consisting of particular virtues. For instance, there is a long tradition, extending down from Plato, that counts temperance, courage, wisdom, and justice as the constitutive elements of virtue, qualities that some thinkers have mistakenly thought to be both inclusive and universal. But the very idea of limiting virtue and ethics to particular attributes and traits (*mabda' al-ḥaṣr*) is flawed. First, ethics is coextensive with human actions, since to each and every act that can be counted there corresponds an ethical value. And since these acts are inexhaustible, so are the ethical values corresponding to them. Counting or quantifying them is pointless. Second, the very same ethical act may be dispensed with at various levels, giving each level a different meaning.[24] Third, far from being a numerable quantity, ethics is the way to comprehend the meaning of "limitlessness," since human acts are virtually infinite, and each act operates at countless levels of meaning and intensity. In other words, there is no cap on moral conduct and ethical cultivation because these *endeavors* gain in depth and magnitude to an indefinable and indeterminable extent. And fourth, the reasonableness of the human act may be viewed or judged insofar as it possesses reasonableness in itself (*min dhātihā*). But human acts can also be assessed insofar as they possess reasonableness by virtue of being in the world, that is, by virtue of the effects that all things-in-the-world exercise on them. Once an act is viewed from the latter perspective, which Taha terms *maʿqūliyya takāmuliyya* (complementary intelligibility), it ceases to be quantifiable or classifiable. Belonging

squarely to this *maʿqūliyya*, religious rituals represent a way toward limit-lessness, for there is no bottom, ceiling, or knowable magnitude to their operations on the soul. "Therefore, the attainment of limitlessness in rituals [read, praxis] by virtue of ceaseless performance is the attainment of comprehension of their Legislator whose unboundedness is infinite" (*SA*, 56).

It is clear that a critique of the Western diminution of ritual's signifi-cance is intended to be only one step toward a more comprehensive theory, one that subsumes "ritual" and religious works within the context of the relationship between speech and action, theory and praxis. And it is at this juncture that Taha deploys a robust critique whose sources extend back to centuries of discourse and practice in the Islamic tradition. Yet, his critique gains in intensity because it is not merely a recapitulation of the Islamic historical tradition, an effort to "revive" a legacy that has met with much destruction at the hands of colonialist modernity. The critique, instead, is intellectually transgressive rather than apologetic or defensive. Its aim is as much to rebut certain modern practices as to remold and recast a near-forgotten tradition.

IV

A salient characteristic of Western modernity and now modernity at large is that it is a "civilization of speech" (*ḥaḍārat qawl*),[25] this standing in con-tradistinction to a "civilization of deed" (*ḥaḍārat ʿamal*). In the civilization of speech, a fundamental gap exists between words, speech, and discourse, on the one hand, and deeds, actions, and praxis, on the other, a gap in which the former dominates and oppresses the latter (*SA*, 59). This is represented in what our philosopher calls the "information flood," where information technology, the communication revolution, and the globalization of infor-mation have permeated all forms of social and political life. The effects of this "verbal proliferation" on ethical modes of living have been devastating, particularly in light of the separation and isolation of ethics from various domains of life. One such effect is the diminution and thinning of the field of ethics and ethical forms of living life. Among other such constrictions, ethics and morality have been relegated to the private life of individuals,

a sphere that is in turn progressively both shrinking and thinning under the state's domineering power.

The progressive narrowing of the scope of ethics is thus further assailed by a process of straightjacketing that deprives it of evolution, flexibility, and expansion. Ethical formations of the subject have been pushed aside in favor of "legal speech," for law—or the discursive practice of the law—is now seen as the only means capable of social organization and of serving the public good. But "legal speech" is only a subcategory of "political speech," an extensive and intensive discursive formation (to use Foucault's expression on behalf of Taha) that is regarded as having the legitimate right to determine and manage the nationalist "spirit." Yet, "it is well-known that among all possible speeches, there is no speech that contradicts, and stands detrimental to, the ethical deed as political speech does," an argument that Taha will pursue expansively in *Rūḥ al-Dīn* (the concern of chapter 6). "Whereas the ethical deed purifies the soul and ethicizes the subject as a human, political speech, the product of the civilization of speech, has no preoccupation other than to engender love for power and quest for control," thereby producing a national subject, a citizen made of and by politics and juridicality (*SA*, 79).

The civilization of speech is characterized by its operations on two parallel fronts: knowledge and technique. Although technique precedes knowledge logically and ontologically, the two have become complementary and dependent on each other. They have both become objects of fascination (*iftitān*), to such an extent that the pursuit of knowledge has exclusively been defined and constrained by technique. The culmination of the process by which the two forms have evolved since the early seventeenth century has also been one that led to crises in the current forms of knowledge, giving way to the sovereignty of technique. In their aggregate effects, both have led to much harm (*SA*, 91).

Technique is the product of a practical method that depends on sensory observation in the creation and accumulation of knowledge. Experimentation comes to verify or falsify findings, which, once proven true, are elevated to universal laws that all human beings ought to adopt and live by. The method also depends on the derivation of structural forms and quantitative relations that govern the subject matter of study, thereby ordering these forms and relations in such a way as to permit them to yield further conclusions that are purported to possess certainty about sentient and insentient

objects. Scientific technique cares little, if at all, about "ontological density" (*kathāfa wujūdiyya*), the vertical and horizontal relations between the subject of analysis and the range and depth of surrounding existents, those that envelop the subject and give it its true and full meaning. Technique is then a procedural operation that conceives of its objects and defines them in ways, and to the extent, that these procedures can comprehend.[26] All that cannot fall within these quantifying and calculating procedures remains outside consideration. They are, in other words, suppressed from view. As is well known, a procedural technique is instrumentalist, transforming its object into means for yet another object, which in turn is instrumentalized for further inquiry and knowledge. This is combined with a formalistic approach to things in the world, without regard to their matter as value, thereby converting them into objects that come to possess an exclusively procedural dimension (*SA*, 114).

Procedural operations thus dominate the life of modern Western man, and bestow on him two types of competence: possibilities and command (*imkānāt wa-tamakkunāt*). The unprecedented horizons of knowledge that the procedural operation has opened up have enabled and put in motion the confidence that everything is possible, whereas the practical application of this knowledge has permitted the rise of an attitude of control and command, another unprecedented sense of sovereignty. "The difference between possibility and command is that the former is related to theory (or thought, *naẓar*), whereas the latter is related to practice and application (*ʿamal*). This sovereignty, in addition, has become boundless, having no fixed goal or limit. Yet the paradox that arises from this procedural, scientific operation of technique is this: the fullest form that this sovereignty seeks to achieve is to make total-man—that is man as a species (*al-insān al-kull*)—himself possible and yet, at the same time, in command of total-man!" (*SA*, 115).

The totalistic sovereignty arising from scientific technique has engendered another feature in Western civilization, namely, that of prediction (*tanabbuʾ*). Put conversely, prediction is sovereignty over the realms of theoretical possibility and practical command, what Taha might have also referred to as sovereignty over the future.[27] Thus, we may call the phenomenon of prediction-as-grounded-in-possibility-cum-command a rationality of ordering, in which reality is procedurally structured and ordered in a scientific sequence (*nasaq ʿilmī*). This configuration has also given rise to a set of attributes that have become integral to this civilization.

Taha here takes his time to elaborate subtle distinctions between and among concepts that convey the general meaning of domination, including *taḥakkum*, *saṭwa*, *ba's*, and *baṭsh*, concepts that he employs in specific ways, with nuanced meanings that are not to be confused with their lexical and conventional connotations. What is worth noting in all these shades of conceptual meaning is that domination is not directed only externally; it is, no less, a self-imposed and self-inflicted feature of power. It is the domination of man over man, and domination of the self by the self. "The ordering rationality of scientific technique is founded on the cultivation of capabilities of *possibility and command*, . . . all of which are dedicated to a quest of sovereignty over the world." The "possibility" rests on the effective logic that what can be done shall be done; and the "domination" is the totalistic mastery over all things in the world, a universal and unqualified domination (*SA*, 116–18, 132, 142).

At this point, Taha's reader begins to question his designation of Western modernity as a civilization of speech. As the preceding paragraph abundantly demonstrates, our philosopher is acutely aware of the rise in modern Europe of an unprecedented sense of sovereignty, one that affirms not only the death of God but also the crowning of man as the ultimate lord among beings. Since this rise to sovereignty is admittedly practical and effectively entrenched in *practice*, and since this latter is closely tied to command, control, and what Scheler has articulated as a unique form of domination,[28] Western modernity is hardly confined to, or characterized by, speech, however expansive this designation may be. It would seem that if Western modernity has anything to commend it, it is its penchant to *do everything that can be done*, an attribute that Taha, as we saw, himself recognizes. Yet, this does not, and cannot, preclude the characterization of this civilization as one of speech. Indeed, everything Taha says of this attribute and the mode of its manifestations in modernity is, I think, correct. But an unqualified and categorical qualification of this civilization as one of speech may appear as both partial and misleading. In fact, one could argue that the "speech" aspect is somewhat secondary to the practical side of things, although "speech" has undoubtedly played a crucial role in making "practice" and action possible, for "speech" is considerably performative.[29]

One, furthermore, can confidently say along with Taha that "speech" in Western culture has converted unethical value into a new form of ethics,[30]

with the support of denuded rational argument as well as an imperious philosophical tradition, both being major components in that "civilization of speech." This is precisely what René Guénon meant when he also attempted to categorize "Western Civilization" by contrasting it to "Eastern Civilization." But Guénon was more to the point when he described it as a civilization of moralism, in clear contradistinction to genuine forms of morality and ethics, which recognize the bindingness of higher principles.

That Western civilization is a civilization of action par excellence is beyond doubt; that the effects of its actions have been disastrous and very often unethical is even less in doubt. That all this has been legitimized and rationalized by "speech" is central to any understanding of modernity, but this speech *comes subsequent and is therefore ontologically posterior* to the more trenchant and powerful expedient of practice. For if we accept, as Taha does, that the European primeval outlook of "what can be done shall be done" is integral to the modern project—including its forms of colonialism—then this "doing" is the foundation of this project, however much "speech" was conjoined with this "doing" both dialectically and performatively.

One could even go further and insist that denuded rationality, a component of speech and the Logos, is neither the theoretical foundation nor the cause (or reason) of this practice, but the other way around. In other words, "speech," as most eloquently attested in the discourse of the liberal tradition since J. S. Mill, if not before, has had the important function of clothing practice with what Arendt has effectively called, in the case of Hobbes, an intellectual ennoblement of an otherwise tyrannical practice.[31]

Nonetheless, there are two ways in which the idea of "civilization of speech" can be made sense of within Taha's overall system of thought. The first is that Western modernity preaches ideals that it does not practice, or that the ideas ("speech"), however sublime and well intended, culminate through a logic of practice in results and conclusions contrary to or at variance with their original intentions, declared or inferred. This is consistent with much that Taha has already said. In the name of liberating man from bondage, European modernity instead enslaved and often annihilated peoples around the globe, and technique, intended to improve the physical human condition, did more than enslave its own creators. The second way is to say that the West is a "civilization of speech" because a fundamental disconnect exists between reality as an expression of practice

and what he might have called technologies of the soul. This is represented in the structural discrepancy between Sunday's church worship and Monday's business-as-usual, which succumbs to the paradigmatically sovereign realities on the ground. Yet, for this argument to hold, the distinction should not be one between "speech" and practice as *fiʿl*, a neutral term, but rather one between speech and *ʿamal*, that which, in Taha's conceptual repertoire, stands for praxis, habituation, and technologies of ethical embodiment.

Although the expression of "civilization of speech" is painted with all-too-wide a brush, it is nonetheless difficult to see how this overgeneralization is detrimental to Taha's philosophy, for in his constant and consistent emphasis on the practical side of Western modernity (which has problematized his designation in the first place) there is ample and detailed acknowledgment of its role in his overall thought. Modern Western civilization is a civilization of action and deed, no doubt, but not the kind of deed and praxis to Taha wants, and rightly so, to see. Taha would have stood on the side of caution had he described it as a materialist civilization whose speech consists of moralism. More apt, a "civilization of discursive moralism" would per force *presuppose* material and materialist ambition and all the forms of *fiʿl* that Taha has rightly attributed to it.

It is in the nature of procedural scientific technique to legitimize those forms of knowledge that are amenable to its methods, on the one hand, and to marginalize and oppress those forms that fall outside its sway and capabilities. Whatever lies outside experiment, quantification, and calculability is pushed aside and out. "It is no wonder, then, that in its quest for total sovereignty, the ordering rationality of scientific technique would sever its ties with ethics, ousting the effects of ethics' subject matter from its objects of inquiry and barring ethical approaches from the methods it has established" (*SA*, 118). This is not to say that this rationality and its technique did not develop its own code of ethics (which can be seen in the practice of medicine, business, and liberal discourse at large, all of which exemplify what a civilization of speech means). Rather, what Taha seems to have in mind is that the entire range of the ethical technologies of the self has been obliterated from the sociology of knowledge, a claim that echoes Foucault's monumental statement that in modernity this technology has faded from memory.[32] This unprecedented rationality and its technique have thus replaced

this morality by a claim of advance and improvement in the human condition, represented in the success of alleviating famine, reducing disease, and affording a materially better and, presumably, safer world.

The ostracizing of religion and religious technological works has amounted to the abandonment of the chief source that provided man for millennia with life's meaning and criteria for ethical conduct, all of which possessed higher power for ethical development than the materialist world that has been opened up for, and by, the modern subject. Materialism has become so pervasive that it has transcended economic gain and passed into the realm of man himself. What was once spiritual and spiritually ethical has been converted into bodily and concrete forms of benefit and harm, pain and pleasure. The limitations of denuded rationality have therefore come to be expressed by an almost exclusive focus on the body (*miʿyār al-taqwīm al-badanī*), as it is here and now. In short, modern Western civilization is constrained by reason, oppressive in its discourse, in crises with regard to epistemology, and domineering in its technique (*SA*, 145). Total sovereignty has therefore developed a system not only of ordering (*naẓm*) the world, but also of reorganizing (*tanẓīm*) and disciplining it (*intiẓām*). The first has excluded and marginalized religion and spiritual values, what may be called metaphysics; the second has dominated it and additionally created its own substitutes for it.

The damage and devastation that technological modernity has caused led some moral philosophers to think of ways to correct this path of destruction. Notable among these is the German philosopher Hans Jonas, whose book *The Imperative of Responsibility* has generated a good deal of controversy.[33] A main idea of the book is that the adverse effects of technological progress are and have been unpredictable and that humanity is facing a distinct threat of annihilation. The renewal of ethics is therefore in order, a project that requires the development of a covenant between humans and nature. The central idea of the covenant is the need for a pervasive ethical responsibility toward nature, one that exceeds in strength and power any form of social contract. Fear of annihilation, in turn, constitutes the backbone of this concept of responsibility.[34] And because it is so interwoven with this concept, "responsible fear" (*al-khawf al-masʾūl*) is unlike other kinds of fear that can prove debilitating. To the contrary, responsible fear propels and precipitates action, because it is entwined with the hope of averting

destructiveness. In Jonas's vision, fear then becomes a way of gaining consciousness about the excessive precariousness and risks of modernity. At the same time,

> fear elucidates the possible relationship between irresponsibility and the human technical project. Since technology turns human action into an *irresponsible excess of action* . . . an ethics of responsibility ought to preserve "the heritage of a past evolution.' . . . Jonas insists on the essential solidarity of human life with the general phenomenon of life. The complex dynamics of life's evolution has an ontological, transcendent and metaphysical meaning, and so the humanity—as part of that overall adventure and evolution—has the "supreme duty to preserve it intact." As a consequence, mankind today is committed to acting so that humankind tomorrow will be able to *respond* to the outcry of terrestrial life, that is, it will *be able to assume* the ontological duty of responsibility. So this is our current obligation towards future mankind:
> [Jonas argues that] "[t]his means, in turn, that it is less the right of future men (namely, their right to happiness, which, given the uncertain concept of 'happiness,' would be a precarious criterion anyway) than their duty over which we have to watch, namely, their duty to be truly human: thus over their capacity for this duty—the capacity to even attribute it to themselves at all—which we could possibly rob them of with the alchemy of our 'utopian' technology."[35]

Jonas formulates his theory of responsibility in the same manner Kant states his Categorical Imperative: "Act so that the effects of your action are consistent with a continuing genuine life on earth."[36] To this extent, Jonas's work must be credited with bringing awareness to a rationality that has forgotten the true order of things and that has unjustifiably excluded religious ethics. His theory contributed to the understanding that prediction has limits that cannot be overcome without reaching peace with nature. Furthermore, it suggested the necessity of adopting two metaphysical principles, the first of which is respect for creation as an indicant of the existence of a creator. The second is the principle of stewardship, which makes man the ethically responsible custodian of Earth (*SA*, 125).

Yet, despite his repeated invocation of these two principles, Jonas shirks from teasing out their full implications, leaving them analytically stunted and thus incapable of reaching their full potential. Which is to say that his central concept of responsibility and its associate, fear, remain at the

surface,[37] because anxiety about the unknowable future is alone insufficient to infuse the feeling or compulsion of duty in us: it simply does not possess the full competence to reward and punish. Jonas has replaced metaphysical fear with an earthly fear, but the difference between the two is qualitatively great. The former is totalistic, profound, and internal, whereas the latter is partial and relatively exterior. The "future of the Earth" can be neither safeguarded nor given a truly all-encompassing meaning by such limited considerations as Jonas has proffered. The future must be secured through a cosmology that transcends our immediate existence. What Taha wants to say is that Jonas, in succumbing to the dictates of secular humanism, has substituted a human kingdom for the greater kingdom of creation, thereby reenacting the very principles that foreground Western modernity—the very modernity that has given rise to contemporary crises in the first place.

Similar limitations are also to be found in Karl-Otto Apel's and Habermas's ideas. From the adverse effects of technology, Apel deduces the need for what he called universalistic ethics,[38] a system that all nations on Earth, with their divergences and differences, contribute to the construction of. Such cooperation of course presupposes constant communication between and among their members, since this communication in turn assumes a universal and a priori set of ethical values, to which various groups in each nation, be they scientific communities or lay persons, conduce. The variegated and disparate contributions render this macroethic superior to, and would thus supplant, any form of scientific ethics, if for no other reason than the fact that scientific rationality and ethics are constrained by their own narrow vision of reality, whereas collective ethics represents and expresses the widest range of general and particular societal needs everywhere. Habermas, on the other hand, advocated a communicative ideal that provides the core normative standard for a moral-political idea of inclusive but free critical discussion in which interlocutors treat each other as equals in a cooperative attempt to reach an understanding on matters of common concern. This ethics of communication takes the form of debate that is grounded in the normative principle that the results and conclusions of the debate would be agreeable to all participants because they reap the benefits accruing from such debates.[39]

Admittedly, Taha concedes, Apel and Habermas are successful in averting the pitfalls of the rationality that has commandeered religious ethics.

In their thought, ethics enjoys an autonomous normative function in debate and communication, one that is more than a match for science, for it is clear that communication has hitherto been confined to particular values rather than given to rule as a universal criterion. It has been subordinated to ethics, rather than the other way around (*SA*, 125–27).

Yet, Apel's and Habermas's theories of communicative action are lacking on two accounts, one related to truth (*ḥaqīqa*), the other to reality or feasibility (*wāqiʿ*). Insofar as the first is concerned, the agreement of the participants to the debate on particular normative common grounds does not prove the truth of that on which they agreed. The participants may have legitimate corrective demands but the solutions they have agreed on may not be truly remedial or corrective. Consensus of the participants is no proof of reaching the truth (*ḥaqq*). All that such an agreement can lead to is correctness (*ṣawāb*); but correctness is not to be confused with truth, for it is no more than the preponderance of possibilities, a strong probability at best (*al-ẓann al-ghālib*).[40] Truth, on the other hand, is nothing less than absolute certainty and demonstrative proof. Taha's point here is that communicative consensus is subjective, since it is not guided by higher, nonmanipulable, and noncontingent principles on the basis of which truth, as the most ascertained form of knowledge, can be judged to have been attained.

As for feasibility, Apel's and Habermas's proposals are impossible to achieve under the globalized system of communication prevalent today. Globalization's systematically unethical practices, consumerism, and deception in marketing and propagation of information have already had devastating effects on humanity and its spiritual constitution, on the psychology and mind of the individual and her ethical orientations. This "informational calamity . . . has been more harmful than the havoc that a nuclear war would wreak on property and life" (*SA*, 127). These truth-related and reality-related problems in Apel's and Habermas's proposals severely limit the possibility of constructing communication on ethical grounds. Even correctness may be questionable. We are thus left with one of two choices: either we seek another theory of communication grounded in an external, higher, and objective concept of truth that leads in turn to a *truthful* agreement among the participants, or we abandon this theory altogether, thus seeking a different route to ethics.

Similar objections can be voiced against what may be called the theory of weakness (*naẓariyyat al-ḍaʿf*), advocated by the French philosophers Jacques

Ellul and Dominique Janicaud. Both thinkers start from the premise that technique and technology have brought a good measure of disaster to humanity, and agree that what was originally intended to serve humanity has ended up oppressing and dominating it. The ferocity of this phenomenon even permits the formulation of a dialectical law that may be called the Law of Inversion (*Qānūn al-Inqilāb*): *Every rationality that seeks to reach the absolute limit of power will be inverted into its opposite, inversion itself marking the limit that the power of rationality cannot transcend.* Ellul, like Janicaud, thus calls for scaling back the ambitions of both rationality and technique by means of adopting a much needed ethic of asceticism. Clearly, such a deliberate approach to ethics calls for refraining from the adoption of any technical "achievement" until the effects and ramifications of this "achievement" are shown, to the highest extent possible, to be beneficial and not harmful. This Luddite-like skepticism must also be accompanied by a relinquishment of the rules of conduct that have already been imposed on us by the imperatives of technique (*SA*, 128). Briefly put, these two theories call for a deliberate adoption of weakness as a way of fighting back against power, itself the embodiment of strength and force.

Taha admits that Janicaud's scaling back on the exercise of (denuded) reason and Ellul's virtual boycott of technology and technique are steps in the right direction, one that brings them closer to religious ethics. Yet, their theories, like those of Apel and Habermas, remain shallow, especially Janicaud's (*SA*, 129), lacking anchors in what Taha might have called moral technologies of the soul. Religion is the easiest, fastest, and most convincing way to accomplish this ascetic stance. Religious asceticism, whose emblem is the adoption and perfection of weakness, is precisely "the door through which the soul is strengthened in its encounter against the temptation of technique." Without a structured, systemic, behavioral, psychological, and spiritual anchor for this "withdrawal," Ellul's and Janicaud's calls would be inadequate, for they would remain lodged within a powerful system of rationality and technique that they can only theorize about but never transcend.

In sum, while the three theories of responsibility (Jonas), communication (Habermas and Apel), and weakness (Ellul) claim to revise the destructive course of the rationality of scientific technique by means of an alleged corrective ethics, they remain largely embedded in the conventional morality of dominant discourse and thought. They offer too little too late (*SA*, 131).

Furthermore, they not only remain prisoner to conventional Aristotelian rationality; they have also diverged little from the Western rationality of technique and domination. True, these theories do not subscribe or incline to a prevalent modern ethics that has distinctly and consciously distanced itself from religious ethics, since the sovereignty over nature it sought to achieve could not coexist with the practical application of this new morality.[41] Yet, the difference between these theories and prevalent morality (Guénon's moralism?) is nonefficient, even irrelevant (*ghayr mu'aththir, bal ghayr mu'tabar*), because the mode of theorizing ethical meanings that secular ethics has devised is identical to that which these theories employed. Hence, their consistent and constant failure: "Before this or that reform is completed, new, unexpected problems arise from this very reform; and so they [the Western moderns] reform it again, only to find other problems that they did not anticipate. Superficial ethics are useless for solving profound problems."[42]

Efficient critique—to stay with Taha's terminology—is therefore a revaluative discourse that does not assume as its foundation the same epistemological premises and ontological assumptions of the phenomenon that gave rise to the object of critique. Efficient critique must thus be an outsider, grounded in assumptions and premises that cannot share the same epistemological and ontological structure that governs its object. The three theories are all but lacking in both *tasdīd* (guidedness) and *ta'yīd* (enhancement), which is to say that they altogether miss the second and third tiers of rationality.

<center>V</center>

If it is accepted that the quiddity of humanity is ethics, then the "civilization of speech" can be said to have exercised the highest form of oppression against humanity at large. In order to exit this oppressive state of affairs, a renewal of the human (*tajdīd al-insān*) becomes a necessity, a renewal that in turn requires a radical and totalizing act of ethicizing (*takhalluq jadhrī wakullī*).[43] While not necessarily identical with religious experience and religious modes of existence, this renewal, Taha argues, comes closer to religious forms than to any other. "It is not possible for the old human being that Western civilization has created to give birth to this new human being without

an ethical transformation, one that most resembles the ethical transformation that the religious experience performs at the level of enhancement" (*SA*, 80). The reference here is of course to enhanced reason (*al-ʿaql al-muʾayyad*), which yields enhanced ethics (*takhalluq muʾayyad*), both of which are seen as fully embedded in, indeed defining, a civilization of praxis and technologies of the soul, not "speech."

To exit from the civilization of speech with all the "ethical diseases" (*āfāt akhlāqiyya*) it has brought about, and to pave a path toward a civilization of deed and praxis, the full meaning of an enhanced religious experience must be explored. As a first step, it must be understood that enhanced ethics is neither an optional mode of conduct nor a frill (*taraf*); nor is it, still, a superadded or complementary quality. It is as binding as law is, with consequences for violators and offenders, whose acts and misdeeds bring harm to both the individual and the community. The difference between the legal violator and his ethical counterpart is that while the punishment of the former is administered by an external authority (*sulṭa khārijiyya*) belonging to a criminal system, in the case of the latter, it is an internal authority (*sulṭa dākhiliyya*) directed by divine providence, and thus possessing a much deeper spiritual dimension. Whereas external punishment sequesters the violator into imprisonment that isolates him from his social world, internal authority sequesters the spiritual dimension into a form of exile, thus depriving the individual of access to the true meaning of life and good living.

Furthermore, enhanced ethics avoids the aggregation and lumping of acts with a view to dispensing with them in efficient and practical ways. Rather, it breaks down every single act into as many subacts as each agent can discern. And with each subact, the psychological element of *niyya* must be present—this being a central and profoundly important concept for Islam in general and for the intellectual and *sharʿī* traditions of premodernity in particular.[44] Taha makes frequent reference to it, often by using it as an example to illustrate his arguments, which is precisely what he does here. As all major legal schools (*madhhabs*) have long held, *niyya* occurs in the heart (*qalb*), and need not be accompanied by verbal pronouncements, although some jurists require verbal confirmation. It is an internal state, giving acts of worship their identity and separating them from other identical acts that do not belong to the category of worship, e.g., washing the face or handing over money. The latter might be an act of either paying alms-tax (requiring *niyya*) or simply paying for a purchased object, just as the former might be

either an act of spiritual purification or just a mundane act of refreshing oneself. *Niyya* constitutes an awareness of, and confidence in, the individual act as fulfilling a particular purpose that is categorized as an act of worship, irrespective of whether the act is ritualistic, commercial, material, social, or otherwise. Acts that cannot be mistaken for any other actions do not require *niyya*.[45] Thus, by attaching *niyya* to subacts, which by necessity are interconnected and thus constitute one larger act, the cumulative act would be said to have been accomplished fully, wholeheartedly, and with total engagement and dedication. This is an eminently self-conscious way of living, and a thoroughly attentive approach to the care of the self.

Clearly, then, the deep psychological impulse involved here cannot be limited to certain or select acts in the life of the subject, but must be generalized and must underlie all his or her acts. Whereas a corporate functionary might view the garnering of wealth with "wholehearted and total engagement, and dedication," his or her gestures of corporate philanthropy may be nothing more than a reflection of a detached corporate practice we normally label "social responsibility," just another way of enhancing profitability. To fulfill Taha's requirements, every act, whether small or large, whether done for the self or for the other, must be imbued with the psychological energy of intention. Which is to say that the condition attains true fulfillment only when the same force and depth of this intention underlie, in equal measure, both quests for profit and philanthropy, for garnering wealth for the self and helping the poor.

This horizontal multiplication and subdivision of acts accompany a vertical layering approach. Each act has the potential of internal multiplicity in that it possesses ever-deeper meanings. Take, for instance, the concept of loyalty, when this attaches to certain works. A person may be loyal in the performance of a duty or a deed. He may perform the deed without seeking a reward. Yet, this level of loyalty may rise to a yet higher level of intensity. He may not see his loyalty in the performance of this act as worthy of the name, as being anything particularly noteworthy. He may, in other words, be intensely loyal without caring about the value or worth of his loyalty. A still higher level of intensity may occur if he attains a state in which he is intensely loyal without caring in the least whether he is loyal or not, and whether his loyalty is deemed meritorious or blameworthy by others. Loyalty is one thing, one level of intensity, whereas awareness of loyalty is another. But transcending awareness of loyalty is a different matter

altogether, a level of intensity that surpasses the two earlier stages. Here sincerity of intention becomes commensurate with the truthfulness of the performer's speech, and the truthfulness of her act becomes commensurate with her sincere intention. Thus, a single ethical act possesses a multiple and multilayered constitution, with each part and layer reflecting a particular ethical state (*SA*, 82).

No less crucial for enhanced ethics is its comprehensiveness (*ittisāʿ*), for it is all-inclusive, all-encompassing. Every single act, large or small, is tied to an ethical duty that must be present either internally or publicly. Ethical duty is deeply psychological, thoroughly social, and comprehensively communal and public. It manifests itself not only at the level of the relationship between man and God, between the human being and her creator, between the individual and the social group; it also manifests itself in all other domains that relate to all living beings, whether sentient or insentient, material or immaterial. Trees, insects, and stones are as significant as the concepts of wealth, time, or love. The "rock that averts one from impeding the path of another" must be viewed with awe, and the "times in which one finds himself living" must not be cursed, for both rock and time are spiritual energies (*ṭāqa rūḥiyya*) that are akin to one's sense of gratitude for the entirety of creation and its creator. The ethical act thus encompasses everything and anything, in the same way the Creator encompasses all his creation, for all creatures possess specific rights, exclusively belonging to each of them, rights that are ethical to the core (*SA*, 83).

Enhanced ethics, absent from the civilization of speech, also requires relinquishing abstract thought for its own in favor of actual practice. Discursive analysis, theorization, and rhetorical language are of no use. Action, praxis, and works are the desiderata, requiring commitment, consistency, and unwavering regularity (*SA*, 84–86). In the commission of the entire range of life's acts, the human subject as an enhanced ethical being is formed. Ethics therefore is a dialectic of performance and self-fashioning, the one generating and engendering the other. What one knows one practices, and what is practiced is what one knows.

This integrated ethical existence may be contrasted to the fragmented modern subject, whose knowledge of the world seems often unrelated to courses of ethical action. Taha does not historicize these differing identities, but it is not difficult to provide an illustration. Take, for instance, a typical professor in a medieval Islamic university as compared to a typical

modern professor of, say, moral philosophy. In the case of the former, there was, as a general rule, a near identity between knowledge in the "classroom" and the personal conduct of the professor in and outside of that pedagogical context, for the criterion of moral exemplarity was enshrined, consciously, as an ethic, a requirement, and a standard by which the professor was to be judged.[46] Personal rectitude (ʿadāla) and ethical predisposition, among other morally grounded requirements, were imperative for practicing the "profession," if not for qualifying to enter its ranks in the first place. Unethical conduct came at a price, not least in the form of biographical accounts that would record misdemeanors, and that would remain, as they did, a legacy for successive generations and centuries.[47] The work of the author-professor would normally gain or lose authority by virtue of these accounts. The typical professor qua professor then was, morally and ethically, an exemplary figure, one after whom the students fashioned their own selves, just as the professor had fashioned himself in the tradition of his teachers, back to the Prophet, and just as the students of the students were to do.

Compare this with the modern professor, whose personal conduct outside the classroom is not seen to be related to what he or she teaches, much less as a topic of ethical inspection and valuation. A professor might be teaching, successfully, ethics and moral philosophy from Plato to Kant to MacIntyre, and still be even "a successful psychopath" and a scoundrel of sorts. As long as he has not committed a criminal offense, he would continue to operate as a "normal" member of the profession. This example, exhibiting what I have elsewhere called a "genetic slice,"[48] illustrates, I think, the difference between what Taha calls the civilizations of speech and that of deeds.

A central characteristic of the civilization of speech is its inability to engender happiness in the individual, who always feels a lack, and whose needs expand progressively without being ever satiated. Our philosopher does not tag this dilemma in terms of negative and positive liberty, but this is in effect what he is arguing. "If the source of misery (shaqāʾ) is the individual's feeling of deprivation and lack insofar as (material) interests and greed are concerned, the source of happiness is his feeling of freedom from these interests and needs, and it is well known that enhanced ethics enables the individual to free himself of all that which is not beneficial to him, and to bring him closer to that which serves his higher ends" (SA, 87).[49]

Consistently and systematically rising above these material and material-ist needs has the power to free the individual from the constraints of desires and wants, a mode of existence that brings him closer to happiness than other paths, by which Taha means negative freedom. The individual's happiness is not tied to things external to the soul, on which his happiness depends, but it rather resides within the soul. "It is a hidden happiness, because its source, a spiritual tender, is never ephemeral" (*SA*, 87).

Finally, and against misconceptions prevalent in denuded reason and the civilization of speech, enhanced ethics is nothing if not aesthetical. In the Western conception, ethics should not encroach on aesthetics and art, on the grounds that ethical value constitutes an imposition, a coercive phenomenon that dictates various means of deterrence that limit and oppress art and aesthetics, when the existence of these depends on the emotive states of the artist. In enhanced ethics, by contrast, beauty and aesthetic values are ethical in the first order, because the relationship between this form of ethics and aesthetics is neither authoritarian nor oppressive. For such a misconception assumes an externally imposed coercive system of control, when this is by no means the case where enhanced ethics is concerned.

What Taha appears to be saying is that attributions of coercion and oppressiveness to moral and ethical formation are an ideological weapon that is intended to oppress true ethics and ethical formation in the name of the ethics of freedom. Positive liberty subverts this ideological campaign and, when seen properly, bestows on the aesthete the freedom to create as an ethical agent. In other words, the ideological biases that impose a distinction and separation between aesthetics and ethics are no different from the arbitrary distinctions that Western moral philosophers have willed over the Is and Ought, Fact and Value, and the consequent separations of law and ethics, business and ethics, and science and ethics, among a long series of other separations. Once the subject of enhanced ethics has transcended these oppressive distinctions, it would be readily clear that she can embark on artistic and aesthetical work while drawing on a rich repertoire of relationships between the moral and emotive, between ethics and affective taste. Art would then be a product of a free, self-fashioned subjectivity whose emotive and psychological depth makes for the true realization of (individuated)[50] positive liberty, one that can innovate with profundity, even with contentment and ethereality.

This psychoepistemological position is a consciously articulated and fundamental theoretical choice on which Taha insists through all his writings. The position responds to the claim usually, but I think mistakenly, voiced in the name of Foucault[51]—that a critique of modernity cannot transcend its own *modern* boundaries, leaving it effectively a prisoner of the modern condition. Taha, I also think, would beg to differ. If a critique departs from foundational premises that conceive the subject as constituted by techniques and forms of ethical cultivation drastically different from those that have hitherto performed the modern subject—a critique, that is, shaped by the critical adoption of modes of cultivation deriving from a long and *actual* historical human experience (which Taha constantly draws to his reader's attention)—then the subject that defines and shapes the cultural and civilizational project, which I have elsewhere called central domains, would be operating from a position that is psychoepistemically alien to dominant forms and their discursive formations. This would then be a critique that originates from the peripheral domains, those cracks, fissures, and margins that have the critical power to subvert central domains. But the subversion is *always* conducted through the route of the subject. This subject, the premium of this intellectual investment, would not be constituted by denuded and instrumentalist rationality, would shun the concept of negative liberty, would wholeheartedly embrace a robust *practice* of individuated positive liberty,[52] would reduce materialism to a subordinate status, and would be readily amenable to dismissing technique and its harmful and oppressive consequences. The psychoepistemic constitution and structure of sentiment of that subject would erase the very inclination to sovereignty. This, in other words, is a new subject, a new human being.

Sovereignty, Ethical Management, and Trusteeship

I

> Our approach to the relationship between religion and politics has come
> to distinguish itself from preceding approaches, . . . [for this approach]
> is "neither historical nor political; nor is it social, legal, *fiqhī*, or ideologi-
> cal. Rather, it is a spiritual approach . . . insisting on what the secularist has
> forgotten and taking to further heights that from which the religionist
> has shirked. (*RD*, 17)[1]

With these words, Taha announces the distinctiveness of his method and
argument, and indeed his project that aims to outline a new conception of
politics. As he puts it, the elaboration of the relationship between religion
and politics in his work amounts to nothing less than a "theory of human
existence, for the meaning, horizontality, and depth of this existence are
defined by virtue of this relationship" (*RD*, 181). His is a biting, if not devas-
tating, critique of the two discourses that have come to dominate the field
of political thought in both the West and the Muslim world. The secular West
and its imitating followers in the Muslim world are no more and no less a
target of his critical reassessment than the "political" Islamists, however
varied their ideological and intellectual shapes and colors.

Perhaps surprising to many, the critique of modern politics and political
thought—if not of the Schmittian *political* as a defining feature of the mod-
ern project—begins in Taha's thought with a marginalized and neglected

concept in modernity, namely, the spiritual, raised in his project as a major philosophical problem. There is little wonder then that the work in which he proffers his political critique and remapping of what might be called "political management" is titled *Rūḥ al-Dīn* (*The Spirit of Religion*, however imprecise and inaccurate this latter rendering may be of the Arabic concept of *dīn*).[2]

Clearly distinguished from the self (*nafs*), the spirit, in its most basic definition, is "a hidden matter that [1] lodges itself behind the self so as to agitate it toward good works, and [2] connects its owner to the unseen world once he embarks on acts of purification and preservation of custodial rights."[3] The self, on the other hand, is the ego (*anā*) insofar as it is capable of attributing things in the world to the subject. There is therefore no self without such attribution (*RD*, 513).[4] A key element of the spirit is its ability to connect with the "unseen world" (*al-ʿālam al-ghaybī*) since much of the critique of politics rides on this connection. It is a central premise in the thought structure of our philosopher that the human being possesses, by virtue of her humanity, a dual existence (*muzdawij al-wujūd*), however much this duality varies in degree, quality, and quantity between one individual and another (*RD*, 48, 91, 182). This duality is neither a choice nor an option, but an ingrained quality.[5]

At first glance, this transcendental world may seem integral to the "religious" mind but has neither place nor function in the secular or "scientific" mind. Yet, this perception or interpretation could not be more misleading. The transcendental in Taha is not an objective place, so to speak, nor is it a location external to the human mind, whatever type of intellect it may be. Rather, it is "all that which the human being cannot see directly or immediately with his own eyes," whether he "had seen it before but can no longer see it," or whether he "never saw it but will see it in a future time" (*RD*, 24). More explicitly, transcendence "is not limited, as is commonly conceived, to what the human being cannot see in the First Life but that he will see in the Afterlife" (*RD*, 512). This theistic conception is thus severely confined as both a "religious" experience and an analytical-philosophical tool. Transcendence, in other words, is everywhere, simply because the human being is made up of more than the self (in current philosophical and anthropological discourse the near-exclusive subject of analysis), but is rather anchored in the spirit, the substrate of the self.

Small wonder then that the modernists (*muḥdathūn*) do their best to separate between the two worlds, all the while unable to forget the virtues of the unseen. They have discretely appropriated some of its qualities, one in particular they seem unable to dispense with. This is the quality of majesty (*jalāla*), which they have renamed sovereignty (*siyāda*) as a way of masking its transcendental origins. They have tenaciously clung to this conception and have gone so far as to attribute institutions, peoples, and individuals to it. The endless quest for it has become a signifier of autonomy and of man's endeavor for self-management, all of which is done under the illusion that man can command the affairs of the world as God had commanded them earlier. The result, as is well known, has been a misplaced sovereignty, which has made man master and god, even a self-worshiper (*RD*, 25). Yet, this modernist predilection to transcendentalism is denied and suppressed, but in the very process of suppression, it returns "as if to affirm itself with a vengeance" (*AD*, 42).

This self-divination would have been impossible if it were not for the self, since it is this faculty that specializes in attributing things in the world to the concerns and interests of humans, to one's self, one's ego (*AD*, 93). In secular modernism, this self-attribution (*nisba dhātiyya*) has come to possess an exponentially increasing power that has ultimately reached a point where man "has become despotic without seeing it . . . and a tyrant without noticing it," which is to say that his acts of oppression have acquired a transcendental quality as evidenced in the fact that they have become rationally untenable and as incomprehensible as those that lie in the unseen. "He does his deeds, and witnesses them now, only to [quickly] forget them by relegating them to the unseen" (*RD*, 25). A central concept in modernity's way of living in the world, sovereignty is thus the attribution of human acts to transcendentalism, whether these acts pertain to the domination of the modern state or to violence and oppression, against man and nature.

Taha does not dwell on concrete examples, nor does he show the extent of modernity's engagement in particular events or behaviors as dimensions of transcendentalism. But it is not difficult to invoke political theology, as one among many such examples, to illustrate his argument. Of course, the "return of the religious," the vast swaths of populations who believe in magic and spirits (including those in the West), and the irrationality of the futuristic and secularist doctrine of progress are likewise good examples. "The

political agent . . . continues to harness his inner powers in setting forth his programs, plans, and projects, promising citizens a brighter future and a better world to come, all of which makes him live in more than one world." He does not stop here either. "He rushes into founding a 'complete ideology,' . . . constructing a utopian world that he fills with transcendental outlooks" (*AD*, 43). He then comes to believe in his project as ideal and thus deserving of imitation, bestowing on it, consciously or unconsciously, the status of theology and sacrosanctity (*AD*, 44).

The point to be made here is not just that modern secularism is delusional and unable, in reality, to transcend transcendence, but more importantly that the human being, as a species, is not divisible into worldly and heavenly ontologies, nor is he a horizontal being (*insān ufuqī*), divisible, again horizontally, into a "religious," "political," or "rational" being. If, as Taha has already told us, the quintessence of humanity is its ethical constitution, then the human being is a vertical being (*insān ʿamūdī*) who flourishes in the unseen world as much as in the here and now. There is here a deliberate refusal to subscribe to the definition of man as a political animal, as some have advocated. This understanding is no less false than defining this creature as rational.[6] Politics and religion are no more separable or distinguishable from each other than rationality from ethics. It is precisely this latter, lodged in the spirit, that is all-encompassing.

The act by which the reality of *this* world is absconded to the unseen stands in sharp contrast with, if not in opposition to, another mode of existing in the world, namely, bringing the unseen to bear on this world, where virtue is transposed from that world into this world through the spirit, a faculty that specializes in "acts of purification" (*aʿmāl al-tazkiya*) as fundamental (*jadhrī*) to human behavior. These, therefore, are two oppositional trajectories: one is self-divining and self-virtuous, the other emulates the divine and is virtuous by dint of divine virtue. Taha calls the former *taghyīb*, while the latter *tashhīd* (*AD*, 44–45), best translated, for lack of better expressions, as Extranscendentalization and Intranscendentalization, respectively. Politics belongs to the former whereas religion belongs to the latter. Both are thoroughly enmeshed in forms of transcendentalism, but forms that qualitatively and teleologically differ from each other.

Both Extranscendentalization and Intranscendentalization are therefore "two methods of transcendental management," two ways of seeing and living in the world. The secularist can no more extricate himself from

the former than the "religious," theist, or worshipper can from the latter. In every sphere of life, the actor chooses to follow one path or the other, according to her beliefs and needs. If the chosen path toward management is Extranscendental, then his activity is political and ultimately geared toward sovereign control (*siyāsī/mutasayyid*). By contrast, the goal of Intranscendentalism is ethical self-formation. The Intranscendentalist "economic practitioner," for instance, does not view his activity as a mode of production ensuing from his own self (*min ladunnihi*) but rather as good works to which the Giver (*Rāziq*)[7] guides him. He does not regard the fruits of his work as mere profit, progressively accumulating with further work and production, but rather as a series of bounties bestowed upon him. This economic activity, insofar as it is a form of management, is a religious activity, standing in sharp contrast with the secularist approach. When profits and accumulation of wealth are seen as means to increase one's influence in the financial and business community, therefore bolstering his ability to control market prices and enabling him to successfully compete against his economic peers, his activity is, insofar as it is a method of management, a political activity (*AD*, 48).

II

With this contrast between religion and politics in mind, Taha wants to show that a true interpretation and application of religion (that is, as a genuine religious praxis) is the best method of Intranscendentalism, while politics remains its unrivaled counterpart in achieving Extranscendentalism.

Capitalizing on the indispensability for the human mind of transcendence, including secular ontology (what we call political theology, theology of progress, and the like), Taha argues that Intranscendence rests on three principles. The first of these is *fiṭra*, the innate ability of humans to comprehend their archetypal state as one connected with an unseen world, a fact that is anthropologically attested in societies the world over, including in the so-called secular West. There are not many ways to explain why the majority of people, even in the present, and despite oppressive secular discourse, remain, as they have been for millennia, bound to spiritualism and belief in one form of transcendence or another. "The spirit of the human being possesses a special force (*quwwa khāṣṣa*), mostly resembling

an archetypal memory, and existing prior to his in-this-world memory"
(*AD*, 50–51)—this being a concept of *fiṭra* developed across the centuries of
Islamic theology.[8]

The tenacity of religion thus ensues from this force, for it is *written into*
man's psyche. It is neither a contingent nor an external quality, removable
or disposable whenever the right conditions obtain. Being thus built into
man's structure of being, so to speak, religion is the natural state of his
existence (*AD*, 52). Taha seems to suggest that secular modernity, by deny-
ing transcendence, could do nothing but distort this innate power and put
it to destructive ends, but could never, being the innate quality that it is,
manage to expunge it from itself. On the other hand, religion, as a system
of praxis and works, harnesses this potentiality toward engaging in good
works.

The second principle consists of the challenge one sets up for herself as
the propounder and practitioner, through Intranscendentalism, of the best
form of conduct (*mabda' al-tafāḍul*). Taha is careful to point out that this is
neither a sense of moral superiority nor one of taking the moral high ground.
Rather, demanding systematic and consistent application and practice, it is
a challenge that one sets for herself *before* it is demanded of the other; it is
"consistent with [the idea that] followers of [different] religions are equal in
the duty to treat . . . others as one would treat oneself, just as much as they
are equal in their rights to belief (*ḥaqq al-ḥurriyya fil-iʿtiqād*). They are free
to adopt any belief they want, as long as, in doing so, they do not harm oth-
ers" (*RD*, 62, 69–70). Of course, this freedom is not a vague course of action,
left to whim and desire. Rather, it is a kind of freedom that cannot operate
outside of what one might call a robust concept of positive liberty,[9] bounded
by praxis, yet free all at once.

Third, and finally, is the principle of complementarity (*mabda' al-takāmul*)
through which Intranscendentalism can be realized (*RD*, 70–72). As we saw
in chapter 1, the concept of complementarity in Taha runs against the lib-
eralized modernist claims that the Islamic tradition is divisible into dispa-
rate, even contradictory parts, some rational and others irrational. Taha had
persuasively argued that this vision is untenable. Here, he brings his con-
cept of the interconnection, interpenetration, and internal consistency of
tradition to bear on Intranscendentalism, for this latter has no way of being
fully realized without the various but congruent means established in
the tradition. Religion requires an internally consistent and externally

comprehensive practice that pertains to all aspects of life, whether related to the individual's own private affairs, to her relationship with others, with God, or with the world around her. The means that permit that individual to rise up to the full range of the challenge are thus multiple, if not inexhaustible. Complementarity then becomes indispensable because the various means of human conduct, whether credal or practicable, are all necessary to add range and depth to the ethical realization of the individual's spirit (*AD*, 83). Intranscendentalism through complementarity seeks to achieve the quest for meaning (man's reason for being in the world), for happiness (the enjoyment of meaning), for the perfection of virtue (the perpetual challenging of oneself to become a better human being), and for eternality (the desire, quest, and ambition to be remembered for her good character; *AD*, 85–89).

Politics, on the other hand, remains unrivaled in achieving Extranscendentalism. It is grounded in a conception of self-attribution, where the ultimate frame of reference is the ontological reality of the Ego. Exponential in its command of self-attribution, the self is an incremental phenomenon that is hinged on its ability to put to service and subjugate that which surrounds it. It is, in one important sense, a modality of power, adaptable and modifiable as the circumstances of self-attributions undergo change. And it is here where it differs from *fiṭrī* values and meanings, since the *fiṭra* does not possess the faculty of acquisition and control. It is pregiven, not acquired, and deposited in the very act of origination, not endowed post eventum. It is ontologically prior to the Ego (*RD*, 91–93).

Ethics, so we infer from Taha, is a subjective construct, varying in horizontality and verticality according to the natural disposition and constitution of the subject. Yet, this ethics possesses a core, one without which Intranscendentalism would be impossible.

The list of differences between the two conceptions is long indeed, making actors within each alien to those in the other. Whereas the religious actor is by definition the ultimate expression of humility and modesty, her political counterpart seeks fame, for her occupation and career depend on it. And in order to appeal to her constituency, she must tell lies, manipulating her language to fit the taste and sensibilities of the different constituents. Even upholding truth and ethical values becomes an instrument for success, yet these are always subject to change and reinterpretation to accommodate inevitably changing situations.

Politics, the hallmark of the Extranscendental, therefore by definition *requires* deception and hypocrisy, whereas the worshiper, the Intranscendentalist, does not care for such ambitions. The latter has no reason to engage in such acts and thus, unlike her political counterpart, does not nurture ethical double standards (*izdiwāj khuluqī*). Such duplicity is particularly manifest in the contradictions of the political actor: she is fully aware of the fact that politics is the sphere of conflict, confrontation, and will to power, yet she portrays her "political striving" in terms of service to the nation and higher values of humanity.

Public service—the totalistic realm of what Michael Waltzer has called the problem of "dirty hands"[10]—becomes the veneer that masks self-promotion, self-interest, love of the self, fame, will to power, and much else of the same. Furthermore, this actor perforce possesses *political* double standards (*izdiwāj siyāsī*), since publicly she presents herself as an endorser and servant of the law, yet she militates discreetly against every law that contradicts her undeclared ambitions. Law is evaded or violated whenever or wherever she thinks she can get away with it. Political practice thus has the public appearance of "peaceful management" whereas it is, underneath it all, a "preparation for war." If it is true that war is the continuation of politics by other means, then it is equally true that politics is the continuation of war by other means (*RD*, 104–5).

It is not surprising then that the political actor consciously or unconsciously transfers the meanings of worship from the spiritual world to her own mind of the self, the self specializing in self-attribution. Through this transfer she seeks to realize not worship but her lordship and domination over the attestable world. The transference permits, indeed enables, her to substitute herself for that which she was supposed to worship, this amounting to an operation by which she transforms the attestable world into an unseen world. The substitution would be neither possible nor needed without her maintaining the qualities of perfection (*awṣāf al-kamāl*), which are also transferred onto her witnessed world, but which now acquire a new sanctity (*RD*, 94). And the more domination she attains, the more intensely superimposed these qualities become.

It seems that Taha's concept of the self recognizes, at the lowest level, the self-divination of the subject as the matrix of the modern project and, at the higher level, a progression that arrogates to this subject the status of a god. This would account for both claims, namely, the rule of man over man (as in

Weber and Bookchin)[11] and the generalized self-divination of the modern subject. Simultaneously, the more power accumulates in the hands of the powerful, the more the transcendental quality of unity is transposed onto the world of the here and now, which is to say that the political actor, in the zenith of her power, culminates in harboring the ambition of molding reality in her image, a uniform reality bent to her will, yet one with necessarily earthly limitations that always force it to fall short of its cosmological counterpart. Nonetheless, this does not detain the political actor from accumulation of power, since politics, being a secular theology, creates a subject who seeks to defy death in the absence of a truly godless world.[12] What our philosopher is saying without saying it is that in its full manifestations politics is *by nature* and quintessentially authoritarian, despotic, oppressive, and hegemonic, no matter what form of governance is adopted (*RD*, 91–131). The difference between one attribute and the other, he seems to suggest, is merely one of degree, not quality (*RD*, 128).

The fundamental relation between sovereign and subject, framed in terms of social contract theory, is ultimately one of coercion. Once "ratified," this contract becomes a means not only of depriving the subjects of their rights but also of extending the coercion of sovereign will to the exercise of violence. The exclusive right to use this violence culminates in fear of its threat, a state of mind governing the Extranscendentalized subject as second nature. The sovereign is thus transformed from a party to the contract to a domineering power, interested not so much in securing the subjects' safety as in subduing them. "Fear [of the threat] of violence thus becomes stronger than fear of death, because he who fears death may not fear violence, but he who fears coercion or violence a fortiori fears death" (*RD*, 123).

Yet, this fear, ever present and pervasive, becomes woven into the matrix of the subject's psyche, by making it integral to what has been called existential threat (*RD*, 130). Fear of the sovereign's power is transposed into fear for the self and for one's well-being, whether individual or national. It is a totalistic fear that makes possible the citizen's voluntary, if not willing, acceptance to be led to war, where life and death are decided (*RD*, 125–26). The crux of Taha's lengthy argument in this context is that fear and anxiety, acquiring complex and ever-changing forms, constitute one of the fundamental bases of modern politics. Yet, pervasive fear is the function of domination as exercised by the political actor who is set up as the sovereign.

In contradistinction to the concept of sovereignty in the sphere of religion, political sovereignty is therefore the embodiment of Extranscendentalism.

Another foundational grounds of politics and its penchant toward Extranscendentalism is conflict. For the ego, the locus of the self, cannot attain an identity unless and until it has developed an awareness of the other. Taha capitalizes on the notion that identity in modernity is formed in contrast and opposition to the other, bestowing on this notion a philosophical cloth by exploring the relationship between the Ego, the self, and identity (*RD*, 131–33). "Political relation cannot, therefore, be anything but a relation of conflict; politics exists when and where conflict exists, and vanishes when and where conflict vanishes."[13] Conflict takes the form of enmity, as Carl Schmitt put it. Whereas the ethical opposition of values is between good and evil, and in aesthetics between the beautiful and the ugly, in politics the opposition is between enemy and friend. Enmity is thus an ever-present element of politics; and war and physical annihilation, insofar as they are possible, stand as the only solutions available. If political conflict—or conflict in the *political*—is the highest form of antagonism, then killing is the fullest manifestation of the political (*RD*, 141).

Yet, contra Schmitt (and some of his revisionist commentators such as Chantal Mouffe),[14] Taha rejects the Schmittian notion that the political manifests itself between and among groups, that it is not between and among individuals. In a long discussion, he attempts to show that the political starts with the individual self, which, in its aggregate, makes possible the group distinction between enemy and friend (*RD*, 146–79). It is the formation of the self that ultimately makes the political all-encompassing, even possible. In other words, system analysis would be flawed without taking the self as its analytical point of beginning. For it is in the self that one finds the power of self-attribution, the faculty that affords all the necessary conditions for self-arrogation of power, mastery, and domination. This, Taha might as well have said, is the disease of the individual modern subject, the subject that enables and nurtures the conditions of possibility for the rise and flourishing of the political system, the political, and much else besides.

From the foregoing, Taha derives three conclusions, each represented by a principle:

First is the principle of "choosing an existential direction" (*mabda' al-ikhtiyār al-wujūdī*), according to which the human being stands between two, and only two,

existential choices: he must either bring the unseen world to bear upon the seen (reality), thereby practicing Intranscendentalism, or bring the latter to bear on the former, thereby practicing Extranscendentalism. Second . . . is the principle "of dualism of human constitution" (*mabda' izdiwāj al-bunya al-insāniyya*), according to which the practice of religion is the product of the *fiṭra* that defines the nature of the spirit, this latter being the foundation of Intranscendentalism. At the same time, politics is the product of the attribution that defines the nature of the self, this latter being the foundation of Extranscendentalism. And third, is the principle of "choosing the method of management" (*mabda' ikhtiyār al-manhaj al-tadbīrī*), according to which the human being stands between two, and only two, choices: either religious management or political management, because religion and politics are not two different spheres of human life, but rather two parallel methods for managing these spheres, in accordance with the human being's [type of] connection to two worlds, the seen and the unseen. (*RD*, 181–82)

III

The next stage in Taha's overall argument deals with secularism's penchant for what he calls "the narrowing of human existence." Secularism rests on the separation between the seen and the unseen, thus categorically rejecting religion as a source of political guidance. Secularism no doubt comes in different hues, and is not one thing. However, there is a common denominator that characterizes this complex phenomenon, in both its higher and its lower forms, and the various degrees in between. The American experience represents the lower form, whereas the French is the highest, or "most severe" (*ashadduhā*). Requiring a reevaluation of secularism, "our theory" departs from an "expansive vision" (*taṣawwur muwassaʿ*) of human life and existence. This is an "open vision" (*munfatiḥ*) that permits human existence to flourish in at least two worlds, for while human beings live in one seen world, they may also live in more than one unseen world (*RD*, 182). The thrust of the argument then is this, that existential narrowness is "the gravest disease afflicting all forms of secularism."[15]

Existential narrowness appears to be the function or result of a particular conception of law as a means of social governance. For this narrowness is directly related to the general claim that it is impossible for a society to set forth its own laws without having to enact the separation (*taqrīr al-faṣl*)

between religious and political practice (*RD*, 183). It is obvious that by the nature of things man-made law must eventually serve political purposes, whereas divinely ordained law must be tied to religious practice. Which is also to say that the boundaries of the two modes of legal practice are rendered separate and clearly distinguished from each other. The total separation is said to be due to qualitative difference between the two modes of governance. Just as there cannot be political management (*tadbīr*) in religion, there cannot be, we are told, worship in politics, meaning that religious worship (understood as technological praxis *bent* on ethical self-cultivation) can never constitute the purpose or core of political practice, nor can the latter be at the core of the former (*RD*, 184, 214). Yet, objections to such an understanding abound, and their robustness cannot be denied. And it is with a view to engaging and refuting these objections that the next few dozen pages in Taha's text are dedicated.

Ever since Kant laid down the principle that moral law is autonomous—namely, the source of the moral law is autonomous free will—the practice has been to pit autonomy against heteronomy. In both politics and ethics, modernity has developed the conviction that the latter constitutes an external imposition and that it was directly associated, due to the European historical experience with Christianity, with religion. The religious has thus come to stand for a legislative will that stands outside of and external to man, whereas the political—here the perceived antonym of the religious—has come to be associated with a legislative will internal and intrinsic to man. Founded upon secularism, modernity thus pushed hard to disengage itself from "external legislation," especially in the social and political spheres. Thus, the more a society could extricate itself from this type of legislation, the more modern it was deemed. The most modern of all societies are those that are seen to have categorically severed this link.

This conception has been integral to the widespread view that the older a society, the more religious it is, which is to say that societies become less religious as they "develop" throughout history. In his *Le désenchantment du monde*, Marcel Gauchet argues that societies move from the primitive hunting and gathering "age of magic" to the ritualistic age of agriculture, and from this to religious pluralism, only to culminate, still later in history, in monotheism or theistic unity (*tawḥīd*). This, Taha argues, is both empirically and factually incorrect, and much evidence points to a different historical picture that does not confirm Gauchet's scheme (*RD*, 187). Yet, what matters

is that these claims portray history, consciously or unconsciously, in a linear fashion (*taṭawwur khaṭṭī*). Taha here appears to reject this conception of historical linearity, but his rejection, as we will see, is qualified, for he at the same time seems unwilling to articulate this conception of history as a theology of progress—one that can be partly held responsible for all the problems that "the Western application of modernity" caused. Taha could have succinctly, yet effectively, refuted Gauchet's thesis by shifting the burden of proof onto him: Gauchet must first show that his thesis does not rest on the theology of progress or, if it does, demonstrate that this theology is rationally and ethically justifiable.[16] But Taha had his reasons, as we will see, for not proceeding in this manner.

Anchoring Gauchet's understanding in a theology of progress can easily explain why he also claims, in a historically determinist fashion, that religion will eventually vanish from human society, for it is, after all, the product of a particular historical stage in a long chain of evolution and development. Taha rebuts by arguing that the "return to the religious" in late modernity belies Gauchet's claims. Even though the latter acknowledges this "return," he relegates its power to a secondary, subordinate status, in which the "return" will always be managed and controlled by the terms of secular modernity, which alone can fashion society, including its religious dimensions. In other words, religion will never be as robust or as determining in the formation or management of society as it once was.

But Taha begs to differ. Just as "improvement" is said to obtain in the materialist world of modernity, it is equally conceivable that improvement can be precipitated by religion. "Why is it not possible for spiritual practice to be subject to the same law of accumulation (*qanūn al-tarākum*) that governs progress in scientific practice, where knowledge of spiritual practices' secrets progressively increases as it increases in the laws of science?"[17] If this is accepted, then it is also possible for a contemporary religion to outmatch and excel over conceptions and practices of a historical religion, whereby the former becomes more profound and more meaningful than ever before. "The future of religiosity can thus be better than its past" (*RD*, 188).

Here, Taha clearly maintains the general structure of a theology of progress but harnesses it toward ethical ends. This he does while denying Gauchet the same intellectual right to uphold the supremacy of his own conception of progress. It might appear that the exception our philosopher is claiming stands justifiable, if not wholly justified, by the fact of its systematic

insistence on the ethical. Arguably, however, the theology of progress, in whichever form it is adopted, eventually succumbs to a structure of thought that always privileges the present over the past, an act that is inherently supremacist.[18] It would run against Taha's own principles of humility and ethical time, which require, I infer, that all people, inter alia, past or present, be respected as equals in dignity and value. The implications of this failure entail self-arrogation of power, a sense of superiority that reduces others to inferior status, and much else (including dehumanization), all of which enhance, rather than restrain, the self (as Taha defines it). It is therefore eminently arguable that one cannot adopt one strand of the theology while spurning the rest of the strands. It is either wholly accepted or wholly rejected, but it cannot be a middling selectivity.

The ethical in Taha remains the only central domain, the paradigmatic unmoved mover that stubbornly stands in the service of first-order principles. Modernity has cultivated a neoethics that stands, by stark contrast, in the service of a materialist conception of the world, at the expense of severing the ethical from all ontological forms.[19] This, I argued, has been best manifested in liberal discourse since Locke but especially since John Stuart Mill. Our philosopher inverts this relationship in liberalism, making materialism subservient to ethics. Yet, this subversion is deployed within the same structure of the theology of progress.

We must acknowledge, nonetheless, that a qualitative difference exists between so-called "moral improvement" as articulated in the theology of progress, on the one hand, and ethical disciplining of the self or soul, in both its Ghazālīan and its Foucauldian versions, on the other.[20] This latter is never associated with "civilizational" or societal progress as holistic phenomena, or as historical marches, as Hegel, Condorcet, and others have us believe, but rather speaks to the individual's psychoepistemic and spiritual operations that she exercises on her self for ethical cultivation. In the absence of biopower, nationalism, and the concept of the citizen, this technology would find no place for itself in "civilizational marches," for its only habitat and abode are the individual herself and her community, a social community of ethical value. To say that "we," as a society or culture, can become more ethical than our forefathers, whether Muslim or not, is still to map a theology of progress onto individual ethical cultivation, which would then require a whole set of conditions that must obtain to avert turning it into cultural, "civilizational," or political terms. It is also to imply, as the modern

theology of progress does, that all previous historical stages are preparatory phases from which we learn to avoid mistakes and on the shoulders of which we rise to further heights. In fact, this theology is explicitly articulated in Taha's thought, and forcefully to boot. In *Rūḥ al-Ḥadātha*, he declares that "premodernity . . . is [defined as] the time of falling into the status of wardship (*wiṣāya*), against which modernity revolted in particular."[21] This conception re-enacts the same sense of supremacy that imbues the modern, especially liberal, theology of progress. The conception not only is anachronistic, but can be charged with the double act of narcissistic self-adulation and simultaneous deprecation of the historical other. In this narrative, *furthermore*, there is a subconscious, and thus a disturbingly anachronistic, mapping of the exploitative and violent European Church practices onto Islamic history, making the latter a virtual replica of the former.

Furthermore, the full implications of adopting this theology must ultimately lead to serious difficulties in the part of Taha's thought that deals with the foundational principle of creative continuity (*ibdāʿ mawṣūl*).[22] If premodernity is the age of *wiṣāya*, a clearly unqualified rendering of Kant's *Unmündigkeit*, then why does it continue to be useful to us? And if a positive answer to this question can be managed, then how do we extricate those valuable parts of the *turāth* from intellectual "immaturity"? By this logic, it would seem difficult, if not impossible, to justify any form of historical connectivity with an "immature"—and, by implication, backward and juvenile—tradition.

IV

To return to the main argument, Taha militates against secularist conceptions of the law, conceptions that presume true sovereignty to be grounded in legislative autonomy. There are, he says, two assumptions on which this conception rests, and both are untenable. First is that self-legislation is the first manifestation of sovereign will; and second is the assumption that God's will contradicts the denizen's will (*irādat al-muwāṭin*).[23] The first assumption is in turn grounded in the premise that "legislation" and "attainment of sovereignty" are logically entailed, and that "legislation" and "autonomy" are concomitant signifiers.

Yet, legislative autonomy is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for sovereignty. First, as we have seen, self-attribution is not only the basis of sovereignty; it is ontologically concomitant with it: "There can be no sovereignty without self-attribution." And in order for sovereignty to follow from self-legislation, it is necessary to assume that such legislation, whenever undertaken, ensues and issues from one's self, will, and desires. This assumption possesses truth-value only if we assume that the human being is the creator of her own acts, that, in other words, she has total control over all the processes necessary for originating, formulating, and producing these acts. But this assumption does not stand up to scrutiny, and can be disputed from various angles. The natural determinists, for instance, will argue that our acts are caused by natural forces that are seldom intelligible to us. The theists will object that our acts are birthed in us by God and that we are, despite external appearances, mere vessels and conduits for these acts. One thus may appear to bring forth a law from her own self or will, but she in fact may be doing nothing but reenacting a natural law or a divine law that issues from without, not within (*RD*, 191).[24] Anthropocentric to the core, secularism could not but attribute everything to man, the first and last mover.

Nor is legislative autonomy a sufficient condition, the second prong in the argument against the first assumption. This is by virtue of the fact that sovereignty may obtain without legislation being a primary feature of it, and in fact may not be a feature at all. Ownership, for instance, can be the exclusive foundation of sovereignty. In fact, one necessarily possesses sovereignty by virtue of ownership, but it is not true that whenever one is a legislator one is sovereign. The secularists' stubborn insistence on predicating sovereignty on self-legislation is therefore borne out by neither logical entailment nor ontological necessity, but rather by a single-mindedness "to expunge divine legislation from the citizen's life, thereby limiting legislation to the human [sphere]. This was the consequence of their clinging to the separation between religion and politics, having arbitrarily decided that the former is the sphere of worship whereas the latter is the sphere of public management [i.e., politics]."[25]

Nor is self-legislation a necessary or sufficient condition for autonomy, for there may be, as it is often indeed the case, particular circumstances, contingent situations, or external pressures that compel the citizens to adopt laws that they may not even desire, situations in which they may not feel

they have increased their autonomy by virtue of these legislative acts. Such laws may instead introduce further restrictions upon freedoms that they had acquired after long struggles. No wonder then that, under the pressures of secularism, some major thinkers (Rousseau and Montesquieu, among others) equated freedom with law in that freedom is said to be attainable by obedience to the law, and the more obedience to the law is exercised, the more freedom is purported to obtain. Just as no ethical freedom can be had without total obedience to the ethical law, there cannot be political freedom without a categorical submission to the human political law. The problematic here is not the principle that the foundation of freedom lies in obedience to the law, however paradoxical this may be, but it is the dualistic proposition that obedience to human law is productive of freedom whereas obedience to divine law is a form of slavery (*ʿubūdiyya*). That law issues from human will can in no way mean that the quality of obedience entailed by it is different from the quality entailed by divine law (*AD*, 193). Self-legislation as such is not, therefore, a sufficient condition for autonomy.

Furthermore, autonomy may obtain, notwithstanding the absence of self-legislation (just as self-legislation may obtain by virtue of an external act coercing such legislating, in which case one would be operating as a legislator but without true autonomy). This is so because the ultimate measure of freedom is the extent to which the citizen can truly and genuinely choose what determines whether she is free or not. The wider the range of choice, the broader the limits of freedom. Freedom thus possesses a wider range than autonomy in legislating, for this latter itself is the object of the decision not only to self-legislate (i.e., to choose *this* mode of legislation) but also to choose the law that is being legislated (*this* law). Otherwise, autonomy would be meaningless.

There is yet another possibility. The citizens may find themselves in a situation in which they find it necessary to enact laws that are not of their own making. But in choosing to adopt these laws, they regard themselves as having exercised free agency, in which case the freedom to choose is autonomous. Well considered and deeply reflected upon, their act of "borrowing" might even be said to exceed, in terms of relevance and meaning to their lives, what the original legislators have attained for their own interests and well-being. And if this is true, then the adoption of a higher law, one that may even be divine, is a fortiori more justifiable, rational, and legitimate. Taha could have historicized his logical argument, thereby giving it

a sharper edge and more solidity. In the modern history of what has been called "legal transplants,"[26] this practice of borrowing law from other nations, under the guise of sovereign will, is both extensive and undeniable. Thus whether the choice involves this or that law, it is nonetheless a rational and autonomous one, all the same. Arguably, then, autonomy is determined primarily not by the exercise of self-legislation, but rather by the (potential) ability to choose, by possessing and exercising choice (*RD*, 193–94).

The second assumption in the secularist conception of law, we recall, was that God's will contradicts the citizens' will. The conception is flowed due to the misapprehension of both divine truth and divine will. Insofar as the former is concerned, the secularists equated or analogized (*tashbīh*), on the one hand, between human and divine ontologies and, on the other, between God's knowledge and human knowledge. The equation went so far as to place human reason at the level of revelation, if not higher, this leading to either the humanization of God (*ta'nīs al-ilāh*) or the divination of the human (*ta'līh al-insān*). Yet, in both cases, the transcendent is always present, either for diminution (in God's case) or for enhancement (in man's case). In all cases, however, the analogizing is shallow. Even when divine comprehension is acknowledged as limitless and exceeding in power any human intellectual competence, the nonatheist secularists speak of it as if it is a foreign, irrelevant concept, as if their inability to understand it is itself evidence that God is irrelevant or that he is just not there, all of which comes close to an effective denial of his existence.

The secularists likewise inflate their own capacities, arrogating to themselves a power with which they think man can own not only himself but also all that which exists around him. "Some of them even made it their mission to shake off the [natural] limitations on man's existence, attempting to breach any such limitations. Yet others aspired to expand the horizons of reason beyond any limit, just as politics or economics has been made to be. Their fascination with man's capabilities led them to the fantasy that one day man will be able to rid himself of the natural constraints with which he was born, defying the dominion of time, place, and death" (*RD*, 196). There is therefore a corollary relationship between their fantastical estimation of man's power and their extreme ignorance of that which created man in the first place.

The shallowness of this apprehension is dwarfed by their conception of divine and human will, a likewise confused understanding. Following the familiar pattern of aggrandizing man, human will now becomes no different from its divine counterpart, absorbing its powers and displacing it for all purposes and intents. Yet, this "extension" of will's power is confined to humans when it would be most logical for the extension to proceed further and be distributed over other animals as well. For doesn't man become an animal when he adopts certain modes of behavior? On the other hand, the "ontological distance" between man and his fellow animals is finite and thus the logic of this expectation would make even better sense than the extension of will from God to man, where the distance is infinite. "Even if you were to gather the entirety of the most virtuous qualities of all humans in one person, he would not be entitled to declare himself God" (*RD*, 197).

If this suggests anything, it is that the secularists do not understand the concept of God, much less the very reality in which they live. They regard the relationship between God and man as an external one, as evidenced by Kant's moral law. If Kant wanted to escape divine legislation and replace it with a "rational" conviction of a Categorical Imperative, it is because he and many others like him saw religion as an external, imposed will. Their ignorance of the internal power of the will blinded them to the fact that the distinction between external and internal is one that applies only to the body, not the spirit, which has no inside or outside. Divine will has no venue except through the spirit, ultimately a *fiṭrī* phenomenon. It emanates not *in* or *through* space or place but rather from the divine spirit that pours into its human counterpart (*RD*, 197).

Similarly, they indulged in a conception of distance that regards divine will as foreign, emanating from a distant origin. In contrast, they viewed "man as being close to himself, having a direct contact with his own will, whereby he himself attends to his own desires and interests." Divine will is thus "constructed in terms of antagonism with and an attack on human will, an attack that only the most foreign of subjects deserves." Yet, again, divine will, properly understood, does not exist in space or place, but envelops and surrounds human existence in a way that makes it closer to him than he is to his own will (*aqrab ilā al-insān min nafsih*). This intimacy is such that for man to become closer to his own will, he must go through divine will, for it is the latter that genuinely knows what he needs and where his true

interests lie. In sum, the relationship between the two wills has been seen as conflictual and oppositional, setting up God as an adversary. How can man challenge God as an adversary unless he sets himself up as an equal, as another God?[27]

All this, Taha argues, points to the validity of the initial argument about narrowing the horizons of man's existence. The claim that self-legislation is the basis of sovereignty contributes to an exponential narrowing of these horizons. First, sovereignty, in one important sense, is a lonely place, since it is as large as the sovereignty of weak, transient, and limited humans. By contrast, the worshiper's horizons are boundless, increasing their expansive dimensions with the increase of, and intense dedication to, worship— this latter is what we have called, after Foucault, the technologies of the self. Second, the claim has the tendency to predicate autonomy on self-legislation, which in turn further constricts the scope of this autonomy. Should the citizen, as we have seen, be left with the ability and freedom to choose (*ikhtiyār*), instead of "inventing" his own law, his freedom would be patently increased, in quality and quantity.

(At this juncture, the reader will not have failed to notice that the term of choice for Taha's subject is *muwāṭin*, which I have generally translated, according to customary modern usage, as "citizen." Within the context of Taha's analysis, the usage is puzzling, because it a priori assumes a particular political subjectivity that is wholly the product of the nation-state, against which, as we will see, he appears to militate. None of the authoritative classical Arabic lexicons recognizes this form, assigning to the term *waṭan* the nonpolitical and basic meaning of "residence in which you live."[28] Which is another way of saying that lexically and conceptually, "*muwāṭin*" is a modernist *epistemic* creation, and thus indissociable from a particular political and ideological genealogy that Taha is refusing in the first place.)

The claim that God's will contradicts human will has the same effect of constraining the field of choice. First, it makes it unlikely for man to choose God's will, thus precluding both the very possibility of choice and that particular possibility of knowing the quality of Intranscendentalizing. The underlying, but undeclared, premise here is that while (liberal) secularism pretends to open a space for freedom of conscience and action, it in fact operates to narrow the horizons of this freedom. The choice of Intranscendentalizing, by contrast, is by nature exponentially expansive, not restrictive. Second, the claim of contradiction precludes God from the possibility of

choosing human will, this in turn precluding the possibility of integrating his will into man's will. For when man comes to possess this (combined) will, nothing can reduce or narrow his horizons, "for there is nothing more capacious than an existence governed by a choice tied to God's choice" (*RD*, 199).[29]

One reason why this is the case is that, without taking away from man's self-determination, abiding by higher principles offers a guarantee from deviation or straying from what is most meaningful for human life and experience. Higher principles, general and broad in nature but always invariable, are protective guards that prevent fall-offs. They do not restrict but rather expand and deepen the range of human praxis. The more one abides by this higher legal-moral will, the more unconstrained and free one becomes. But this is not all. Such a manner of viewing the world tends to empower the subject who feels and knows that she is the recipient of divine assistance (*ʿawn ilāhī*). In this worldview, submission to higher principles and acting them out in law, ethics, and the practice of the technologies of the soul acquire a meaning deeper than narrow conventional wisdom allows. It is not banal in the least to quote here a perceptive commentator on the point (one, interestingly in this context, who translated Ibn Ṭufayl's[30] famous work). Putting the matter in the broadest terms, Lenn Goodman perspicaciously noted:

> Islam may be interpreted to mean resignation to the will of God; but if that will remains no longer other, but is accepted by the consciousness as self, then the I can expect of itself the ability to move mountains. . . . This was the meaning of Islam: the progressive assimilation of self to God (so far as lies in human power). This entails acceptance of the divine will, *but not as something alien*. The transmuting of selfish purpose to the will of God need not imply a surrender of will because the assimilation of self to God does not imply a surrender to self. On the contrary . . . this assimilation is the meaning of man's fulfillment *qua* man, the substance of Plato's answer to the cryptic challenge of the oracle, "Know thyself!" To know oneself was to see in oneself affinities to the divine and to accept the obligation implied by such recognition to develop these affinities—to become, in as much as was in human power, like God.[31]

This is insofar as humans, as humans, are concerned. God, on the other hand, Taha tells us, is seen by secularists as representing an authoritarian

interference in human affairs, dictating the terms of conduct in such a way and to an extent that categorically deprives humans of their will and freedom.

> We have already noted that man, by virtue of revealed religion, enjoys freedom of choice in all his acts, and even in creed. If he wishes to believe in God and obey his law, he can do so; if he wishes to renounce God and disobey his orders, he can do so as well. He is not accountable except for those [acts] that he himself chooses, not for what he was forced to do under duress. Furthermore, in both this and the unseen worlds, God entrusted man with certain things, secured from him certain covenants, offered him trusteeship, appointed him his deputy on Earth, honored him with a grant from his spirit, and preferred him over all other creatures—so much so that he made him his friend, loved one, and inter-locutor. If God had entrusted man, since he created him, with all these great responsibilities, then it would be unreasonable for him to strip man of his will and deprive him of his freedom at the moment when he reveals unto man a law whose purpose is nothing but to guide him to accomplish these responsibilities in the best of fashion. The truth of the matter is that God's connection to man is one of absolute creation and absolute revelation of law. The absolute creator is certainly capable of combining the existence of his sacred will with that of the fullest, undiminished range of human will. Likewise, the absolute legislator is certainly capable of making his laws encompass everything, whether it is [as particular as] individual's worship or as general as [macro]management of human affairs; he is capable of this just as he is capable of making man create his own laws, which would comport with those all-encompassing [divine] laws. (*RD*, 201–2)

V

That secularism is the direct result of a clash between Europe's churchmen and men of state, on the one hand, and between these churchmen and men of science, on the other, is a description that claims to historicize the rise of secularism. One could argue, however, that this dualism entails certain elements of anachronism, since the rise of science, in its modern form, is a consequent rather than an antecedent[32] to a generalized clash, one that can be summed up crudely but accurately in terms of massive abuses by the Church

and absolute monarchism of everyone else. Yet, this should not affect Taha's philosophical point that secularism, as an epistemology and set of values, is arbitrary—a quality evidenced in the various forms that it developed in Euro-America. There are the British, American, and French secularisms, among others, with considerable differences between and among them, the French having taken a particularly radical form.

The arbitrariness of all this is the point that our philosopher is trying to drive home. A central aspect of the arbitrariness is the line of separation between religious practice and political work, one that may be described as a paradigmatic separation.[33] The secularists view these two realms of practice as mutually exclusive, making it inescapable to choose one over the other. Deriving from this major separation is the wedge between the "private circle" (*al-dā'ira al-khāṣṣa* = private sphere) and the public sphere, where religious observance is confined to the former and where religion is regarded as pertaining to the "private spirit" (*khāṣṣat al-rūḥ*), this being "a host of practices that [privately] connect the believer, within the hidden layers of his soul, with his God." But this conception is defective, and for a number of reasons that will unfold in due course. However, one reason is worth noting here, namely, religion can be confined to rituals and it has no bearing on public life. This, needless to say, is a reductionist view of religion, belied by the conception, formulated by Mircea Eliade, that the religious agent is a "total human being," *l'homme total*, not a particular, divisible, or fragmentable being (*RD*, 205). Religious practice does not stop at ritual, nor can it be confined to specific, limited, and restricted spiritual needs. Rather, the religious agent is a total man because that practice extends to all spheres of his life, including the social, economic, and educational, not to mention the domains of diet, health, and much else.

On the other hand, the secularists claim that the state, in regulating the public sphere, is concerned only with this sphere and that it does not interfere in the private domain, which it claims to protect in the interest of preserving religious freedoms. But this is a false claim, since the political management of the public sphere has far-reaching effects on all aspects of citizens' lives. First, there is no state that is free of ideology, however hidden and masked such an ideology might be at first glance. For secularism and politics themselves are necessarily ideological, whether they claim neutrality toward religion (as in the United States), or whether they declare an open war against it (as it is the case of *laïcism* in France).

Considering that secularism is a concept of political management, infused as it is with Extranscendentalism, it then follows that the secularist, declaring himself master and sovereign, is, in fact, nothing short of a worshiper of Juggernaut. And given the weight and might, if not hegemony and violence, of the secular state, there is little doubt that secularism's intrusiveness would have profound effects on the increasingly narrow private sphere and the religious agent operating in it. Nor can this ever-increasing intrusiveness and narrowing of the religious sphere be doubted. The French banning of the *ḥijāb* in educational and public institutions is an excellent case in point. Such acts of perpetual encroachment on the public sphere ("publicization" = ʿawmama = ʿamʿama) lead to at least two infractions on the part of the state. First, this latter promises freedom of belief only to renege on its promise; and second, by forcing its religious subjects to adopt beliefs and practices against their religious will, it commits spiritual violence, a form of violence "much more severe than psychological violence, which is in turn worse than physical violence" (*RD*, 210). Thus, this violence and its attendant constricting effects (*taḍyīq*) wreak extensive damage on the private sphere and its religious agent. Taha here is no doubt alluding to the Foucauldian concept of internalizing violence, a modern process of biopower that displaces and replaces external and spectacular forms of violence by internal modes of subjugation, pain, and suffering.

Nor is it valid to claim that management (*tadbīr*) is external to the realm of religion, this being the complement of the other proposition that "worship is external to the realm of politics." It does not take a professional historian to tell us that management has historically preceded the modern state, that it has been the foundation of all organized societies from the dawn of human time. With the rise of the state during the last few centuries, one can discern three forms of management that we live with now, the first by this latecomer, the second by society at large (*al-mujtamaʿ*), and the third by the individual (*al-fard*).

Now, much has already been said to justify the claim that the role the state has played in management has been negative, and this must not be construed to be limited to the secular state (*RD*, 215). Equally and perhaps more culpable is the theocratic state, defined by Taha as a state in which the symbols of religion reign supreme, and its leaders rule in the name of religion. There are two types of this state that must be distinguished, however: the crossbred (*thiyūqrāṭiyya hajīna*) and indomitable (*thiyūqrāṭiyya ḥaṣīna*). The

latter not only upholds religion as a structuring mode of its existence, but also systemically and systematically resists secularism. The former, on the other hand, exists within a hybridity; it promotes certain aspects of religion while neglecting others, and it does not resist the secularist separation between the two spheres. Moreover, this crossbred variant shares an essential feature with the secularist state: the absence of religious dialogue, which is to say, the omission of religion as a legitimate voice in public debate about how a society ought to live. Yet, it differs from the secular state in another respect, in that the secular state exercises violence against its own citizens by constraining the scope of their private existence and endlessly exercising pressure against it. However, it does permit the citizen a certain measure of freedom, however limited, "to exercise the right of *ijtihād* within his own religion" (i.e., to live within the boundaries of the respective sphere as the citizen sees fit). By contrast, the crossbred state imposes its religious will on its own citizens, thus depriving them of the right to this *ijtihād*, and in the process engaging in an extreme form of violence against its own citizens (*RD*, 216).

Against confining religious values to the private domain, Taha argues that spirituality is anything but limited, for "there is nothing more effective in shaping the attitudes of individuals than spiritual values." Possessing optimal power in creating the necessary connection and communication between and among individuals, these values are most able to realize communal social life. But since the secularists can barely transcend the psychological values that form the basis of political values, they are unequipped to comprehend spiritual reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-rūḥiyya*). Human society and management, they erroneously think, can be perfected only when the citizen achieves political values, no more and no less. Spiritual sociality (*al-ijtimāʿ al-rūḥī*) is more apt than psychological sociality in its competence to manage. This claim is again invoked as a historical argument: in its millennial history, religion was never meant to be limited to one or another sphere of life, but was "revealed on the grounds that [social] life can, in its entirety, be based on it. It is a holistic system consisting of commands, prohibitions, guidance, and instruction, all of which bring these [spiritual] values to bear on [human] reality" (*RD*, 217).

The second form of management—that of society—does not belong to the species of state management. Here, there are no special agencies or institutions that supervise transactions or disputes between and among religious

agents. Nor is violence or the threat of it necessary to enforce law and agreements. Rather, it is a form of self-management whereby a balance is achieved between the interests of the individuals and those of the group, on the one hand, and the exercise of their freedoms, on the other. And it is in this latter aspect that society's management differs most from that of the state: the freedom to live in, and with, difference remains a premium value. Difference is not discouraged, crushed, or eliminated, for no single outlook or uniform plan can be devised to homogenize the social body. No majority can be tyrannical, and no majority decision or choice can be protected by force, for the very concept of majority cannot exist in the first place (*RD*, 221).

In social management, the primary concern is not the protection of body and selfhood within the confines of the here and now, this being the preoccupation of the modern state. Rather, the primary focus of this management goes into the inner layers of social transactions as governed by the deep structures of the soul and the spirit. Unlike the modern state, which operates on the principle of ends justifying means, social management insists on ethical processes and the indispensability of moral means. And there is no coherent, complete, and cogent system that can offer a holistic mode of such conduct as religion does. Religion, here defined by, but also abstracted from, the Islamic standard, is the foundation of four of these modes, namely, cooperation (*taʿāwun*), compassion (*tarāḥum*), friendship (*tawādud*), and mutual guidance (*tahādī* = mutual counsel). That ethical society and religion are concomitant (*lā yanfakk[ān]*) is evidenced throughout long stretches of history, and is a concept that has reemerged in modernity, as evidenced in the writings of prominent "social theorists, such as Mauss, Durkheim, and [we must assume, the later] Comte" (*RD*, 221). The foundation of management has therefore been historically social, since the state, as we know it, is a new phenomenon that emerged in the last few centuries. "The constitutive elements of management were first formed by society" (*RD*, 222), which explains why there remain residues of ethical fabric, however negligible, even under the management of the modern state.

The third form of management—that of the individual—has been seen by the secularist as inferior to that of the state, since this form can never aspire to match the collectivist governance that the state can command. The relationship between management and collectivism is one of concurrence and entailment. Which is to say that the secular conception does not allow for an internal will to organize, leaving the state to regulate such management

through the will to coercion. This distinction between the internal and external amounts to a distinction between two kinds of collectivity, and therefore two kinds of subjects, two different concepts of the human that constitute any collectivity. The external collectivity/subject, because it is grounded in materialism, remains fragmented and lacking coherence because materialist interests pull it in different directions. By contrast, the internal subjectivity manages itself as part of the group, which means that this group's management becomes *a collectivity of self-managing selves.*

There are distinct advantages to individual (i.e., internal and self-controlled) management over its collective (i.e., external and state-controlled) counterpart, making the former not only superior but also the original state (*al-aṣl*) in the human conception of management (*RD*, 223). In internal management, the individual encounters her self, examining, from different angles, its deeds and purposes. She is more attentive and interested in reforming her self than others, for we must assume that she cares for herself more than others would care for her. Here, Taha seems to say, selfishness acquires a new meaning, one that transforms not a knowledge of the self but a hedonistic love of the self into an extensive operation of care of the self. Neither would abiding by the highest form of ethics be a luxury or a place of pride and social prestige, since integral to the individual's ethical constitution is the belief (*imān*) that there cannot be a communal management or a collective resolution of conflict without the individual first attaining these convictions and achieving management within her self. In this arrangement, collective or communal management would be as successful as the individuals—as a sum total—make it; or, put differently, it would be as successful as the average input of all the individuals' managements combined.

Yet, to be whole and complete, internal management transcends the cultivation of ethical interests (*maṣāliḥ akhlāqiyya*) with a view to attaining the higher state of attending to the interests of the spirit (*al-maṣāliḥ al-rūḥiyya*). The most perfect form of any human transaction—which constitutes the relations between individuals within a group—obtains not by observance of that which is apparent (*ẓāhir*) but rather by a deep psychological and spiritual conviction of the hidden or inner soul (*bāṭin*).[34] When the individual disputes and censures her self, she does so in order to strip herself of the will to attribution (*irādat al-nisba*), which we have seen to be a challenge of the spirit against the self, for this attributing self is the source of conflict, both

internal (within the self) and external (in society and social collectives at large). The more the spirit can invoke the *fiṭra*, the more the individual's transactions acquire proper order, externally as well as internally. In sum, true management begins and ends with the individual, for without it, no collective or communal management is possible. And since this form of management is the original of all other forms, there should be no denying that logically and historically religion has been at the center of individual management, this belying the secularist claim that religion is nothing more than a matter of conscience belonging to the private domain.

Yet, modern political thought and practice belie this arrangement, and Taha seems to insinuate that what is involved here is a state of denial. Even in secular rule, religion has been indispensable, however much it has been transformed, reshaped, and surreptitiously smuggled into this politics. It would seem that Rousseau was the first to suggest that religion alone is able to give law its power to bind, to create a cohesive political community, and to bestow on the state respect and dignity. This new religion, standing in the service of politics, must consist, the French philosopher advocated, of four basic elements: belief in God's existence, belief in the hereafter, reward and punishment, and the removal of religious zeal. These are said to be so foundational that the violator of any one of them must be put to death (*RD*, 228–29). The fact of the matter, however, is that the events that lay the foundations of this civic religion are revolutions, not revelations. They are political, never religious or ethical.

The paradigmatic cases for this distinctly and uniquely modern conception are the American and French revolutions. The first led to independence and the second to the decimation of a monarchical system of rule in America. But in both cases, and nearly all cases to come, the republic has emerged as the new sacred framework for political association. The Founders, again in both cases, came to believe that their acts, unprecedented in human history, establish the new nation and the new homeland, and constitute and fashion the new loyal citizen. The project was carried even further, for they also believed that they were the bearers of a universal mission, intended to advance the interests and improve the well-being of humanity at large. In the name of advocating so-called human rights, constitutionalism, citizenship, and state, they believed that no nation could escape this fate (*RD*, 229).

Divination, however, remained this project's hallmark. These principles, institutions, and founding documents came to be venerated by legendary

symbolism, rituals, and nationalist paraphernalia. They came to have their heroes, martyrs, cemeteries, holidays, parades, and celebrations. The American case is illustrative. The American Constitution invokes the name of God, although the traditional God of Christianity is here abstracted and reduced to a creator, ruler, protector, and witness. God becomes political. And perhaps economic, as attested in the slogan "In God We Trust," which appears on American currency (*RD*, 229).

Even the genealogy of American nationalism is biblical. Consider the imaginary narrative that draws an analogy between the American historical experience and the story of the "nation of Israel." The migration into North America parallels the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, fleeing, like the "Americans," the tyranny of rulers. And like the "nation of Israel," the Americans are the chosen people, divinely selected to fulfill a historical mission. George Washington, the American Moses, becomes a near sacred figure, with shrines and monuments that venerate him across the country. And like Jesus Christ, Abraham Lincoln becomes the martyr who died saving the African people from slavery. The list of such saviors also includes Martin Luther King, among others (*RD*, 230).

It is clear then that, while remaining both latent and apparent in modern secular politics, religion has been fragmented, rearranged, and sapped of its technologies of the soul. It has been reengineered and managed in the so-called private domain, and contorted and selectively appropriated in the public sphere, as the American case attests. In this analysis, the *latent* phenomenon succumbs to what we have come to call political theology. It ought to be understood, however, that in materialist-secularist politics (*dahrī*) the divination does not rest on the sanctification by all the people or the entirety of the nation, what has been called popular will. Rather, all forms of materialist-secularist politics have at their core a fairly thin section of the population who rule in the name of ideas that serve its interests. This is the ruling class that installs itself at the top of a pyramidal but hegemonic and firmly rooted system of power. In some countries, it is an individual and his cronies, but in others, it is a thin slice of the population possessing wealth and political power. This political religion cultivates forms of nationalism and constellations of ideas that dominate and shape the mind of the social order, convincing the citizens of a set of common interests that the nation ought to pursue. The private sphere, far from possessing any autonomy, becomes a continually reengineered domain that is

subservient to the "public order." The subordinate status of the private sphere goes to the effect of producing a better, constantly renewed and renewable society, and similarly optimized individuals (*RD*, 232).

The radical forms of political theology, such as Bolshevik and Nazi regimes, merely demonstrate the potential of this ubiquitous and all-pervasive phenomenon. Real opposition to their forms of governance is not tolerated. Disagreement on fundamental principles of rule would effectively place the dissenters in the camp of the enemy, who deserves banishment or annihilation. Taha clearly suggests that this enemy/friend distinction may be dormant or sedimented in liberal regimes, but its potential for full articulation and action is nonetheless inherent in them. This conclusion is readily derivable from his statement that "every political system is, by the force of entailment, a totalitarian regime,"[35] and every such regime, "in actuality or by entailment, is grounded in an infinite sovereignty."[36]

VI

If politics and sovereignty are "concomitant acts,"[37] and if the font of sovereignty is the attributing self, then it follows that exiting sovereignty necessarily entails exiting politics, and vice versa. And in order to exit both, the self, their matrix, must be overcome. Yet "speech" (understood here as theoretical analysis, a method integral to what Taha calls "civilization of speech") alone is insufficient. The liberal remedial prescription has been public debate and public participation in collective decision-making, but this type of discourse does not begin to analyze the deep structures of sovereignty. To the contrary, because it banks on public participation, liberalism generalizes and reinforces the love of domination and sovereignty.

On the other hand, "analytical discourse," by which Taha means the entire range of psychoanalysis and its discursive output (*RD*, 257–61), also fails because it cannot transcend the levels of the repressed and the libido, remaining lodged within the "circle of the self." Inherently incapable of accessing all but the world of desire (*shahwa*) and bodily sensation, this "circle must be broken" in favor of spiritual yearning, the yearning love (*shawq*). With a venerable lineage in *ṣūfī* philosophy, the distinction between *shahwa* and *shawq* seems to govern in Taha's thinking. "If the *shahwa* is the language of the self, then the *shawq* is the language of the spirit" (*RD*, 264). Thus, where

both democratic and analytical discourses fail, "individualized *action*" (*al-fiʿl al-mushakhkhaṣ*) succeeds. Clearly, the emphasis here is not just on the spirit, but also on praxis as a genuine contrast to discourse as a theoretical construct. The contrast, put differently, is ultimately between theory/speech, on the one hand, and action/praxis, on the other, as chapter 5 has attempted to show.

To exit the constitutive domains of sovereignty and the sovereign subject, it will not do to appeal to what has come to be known as personal development, therapy, or new age religions. These will inevitably fail, if they have not already, because a genuine departure from this subjective constitution presupposes a total relinquishment of the founding assumption that human existence is intranscendent (*ghayr mutaʿaddī*). Our philosopher poses the problem not in terms of "a solution" as a theoretical matter, an intellectual solvent unraveling cerebral problems. Rather, the solution consists of praxis-based methods (*ṭuruq ʿamal*) that begin with the roots of the phenomenon with which we are concerned. What is involved then is nothing less than *al-ʿamal al-jadhrī* ("radical praxis," or "radically deep praxis"), in effect a total reconstruction of a habitus.

Deep praxis is a radical way of living, not in the sense of extremism by any means, but rather in the sense of going to the roots of things. Its first characteristic then is precisely this, that it is a vertical, nonhorizontal praxis. It penetrates the innermost structures of the individual's psyche and spirit, yet the *bāṭin*, the inner constitution, is not its exclusive abode. Rather, unlike thinking, which does not necessarily manifest itself externally,[38] it transcends to the innermost constitution of the soul so as to shape the outer modes of conduct, which in their turn reassert and refine the inner command of their embodiment (*RD*, 265). There is thus a constant dialectic between internal and external practice.

Radical praxis is totalistic, since it would be self-defeating for it to be partial. It must absorb the full gamut of inner and outer faculties, the full range of being. This should not mean that the entire apparatus of spirit, self, and body is set in motion when an individual act is undertaken, but it does mean that while a particular faculty is engaged in a specific practice, the entire being is moved consciously, emotively, and cerebrally in marshaling support for that faculty.

Radical praxis is transformative as well, aspiring to improve the fundamental aspects of behavior. Taha's writing here may be interpreted to smack

of the language deployed by the theology of progress, but this would be mis-leading. What is at stake is not a perpetual endeavor taken as a final cause or teleology, but rather an ethical cultivation that constantly strives to main-tain and consolidate the moral and ethical for self-transformation. Key here is the constancy and consistency of this engagement. Radical praxis has no temporal point of beginning and end; it is not something to be accom-plished and then set aside. Inasmuch as it is integral to the entire range of being, it must be continuous and concomitant to the whole length, width, and depth of life. It is a gradual and evolving project of living, one that must grow and, accordingly, be nourished. And if care of the spirit is a process of cultivation grounded in contentment, then it must also meet the condition of peacefulness. Coercion and violence have no place in this configuration (*RD*, 265–68).

The means by which the spirit is cultivated as a radical praxis amount to a process of purification (*tazkiya*) that rests on two foundations. The first of these is love of worship (*ḥubb al-taʿabbud*), while the second is the practice of Intranscendentalism (*mumārasat al-tashhīd*). Worship is the beginning of the process in which one relinquishes sovereignty, which effectively consists of attributing to the self a sense of mastery and domination (*SA*, 132, 142). Worship dedicated to a supreme power readily admits of, and confesses to, the sovereignty of that power. In fact, it takes this attribution of sover-eignty to be an apodictic form of knowledge. And so once this certainty is achieved, the individual eo ipso relinquishes the obsession with sover-eignty and enters the domain of freedom, for the very act of existing is itself constitutive of the attainment, or gradual attainment, of freedom. For sovereignty—which is always sovereignty of the self—is a form of self-worship, before it is a subjugation of the other.

The sovereign, sparing no effort to relieve his desire for domination, begins to equate life with death, on the one hand, and the exercise of author-ity, on the other. He no more wants to avoid death than he is willing to lose that power over others (*RD*, 271). This obsession has such a sway over his mind that he cannot imagine the world in a future in which he no longer lives. The first stages of freedom thus take effect at the moment when self-worship begins to wither and culminates in a true attainment of freedom when purification has run its fullest course. In theory, the fullest extent of purification is the fullest extent of freedom that can be attained. But Taha

has, as we saw, in effect already asserted that "fullest" is a relative concept, and in effect has no quantifiable upper limit.

Although the sovereign appears to rule over others (i.e., his subjects), the hidden (*bāṭin*) structures of the relationship betray the reverse of that appearance. In the very act of possessing and exercising sovereignty, the sovereign in fact stands in the position of being dominated by his very subjects, for without them he cannot achieve his ambition to sovereignty. A sovereign subject ontologically presupposes a sovereignty-object. In other words, he needs his constituency as much as, if not more than, this constituency needs his sovereign management. This need, which is totalistic (since it defines the existence and quiddity of the sovereign as sovereign), defines the sovereign's status not just as master of his subjects but, because of his need, also as the subject of his subjects. If need is master, and if indispensable need is an indispensable master, then the dominated constituency is at the same time master of the sovereign. The burden of this dialectical servitude, especially the servitude of the sovereign, can be relieved by appeal to a higher power, whose worship, in the form of techniques of the soul, represents a gradual acquisition of freedom (*RD*, 271).[39]

Belief in the sovereignty of God represents the belief that the one entitled to sovereignty must possess perfect absoluteness, the most abstract quality of perfection. This quality stands in a correlative relationship with human freedom, since the more abstractly we conceive of divine perfection, the more unlimited this freedom becomes and the more empowered human agency is. Attaching oneself to the Unlimited and the Unbounded is placing oneself in a capacious relationship, where all that exists outside of this perfection is limited and constrained. It does not take much here to capture the thrust of Taha's argument that the law of this perfect being is an ethical system of a robust form of positive liberty, whose teleology is freeing the self of need, of domination over others, and most importantly of freeing the self of the self (*RD*, 272–73).[40] It is a sort of "annihilation" of the self.

At this point, the confluence of spirit, self, and purification begins to reveal the role of faith. A technology of embodiment, purification is a host of practices aimed at "lifting the lid of the self from the spirit." It is, effectively, the technology that induces and cultivates Intranscendentalism (*RD*, 511). Which is also to say that the technique of purification is a practice that not only expands human existence, adding to it new dimensions, but also,

in the process, permits faith to expel all desire for sovereignty.[41] Faith thus emerges as a master (*sulṭān*) that can banish all other masters, including sovereignty, for "it takes a *sulṭān* to dethrone a *sulṭān*" (*RD*, 275). Likewise, faith is a deterrent (*wāziʿ*) produced by purification and is anchored in the spirit. Because this deterrent is spiritual and faith-based, it induces fear in the self, just as deterring punishments induces fear in the juridical subject. But this fear is unlike any other. It is a fear that both the self and the enemy of man fear; it is one that bequeaths piety, for after all, the definition of piety is that it is fear of God as well as fear by God's enemy of this fear (of course, it is not difficult to infer here that the enemy of God is the enemy of humanity as ethically constituted, *and vice versa*). The fear on the part of God's enemy is engendered because this enemy has lost their sense of domination and thus grip over mastery (*RD*, 275; *SA*, 142).

Fear of God ensues not because of the God's omnipotence to punish or to threaten with punishment but rather because of the constant quest, or fear of failing, to win God's love. To love God and be loved by God are the parameters that set the boundaries for the quality of *ḥayāʾ*,[42] ethical modesty, restraint, and pious reserve.[43] *Ḥayāʾ* is the precondition of worship and purification, a quality of pious humility that precludes a sense of sovereign mastery and dominion. Compared with the fear of earthly rule (the state and its institutions), the fear of God obviously emanates from a different origin. Whereas the fear of state is fear of its violence and punitive measures, the genealogy of the fear of God is in love and the care that one must take not to lose it. Loving God is loving everything that God created, and losing this love amounts to feeling (being?) alone in this world, the self separating, if not isolating, itself into an antagonistic realm that stands not with, but against, the world. *Ḥayāʾ*, worship, and purification then stand in an effective relationship of knowledge and, more importantly, embodiment. It is, one might say, a technology not of the Foucauldian self, but of the spirit, resulting in a wholly formed habitus in which faith is entwined with *ḥayāʾ* to produce humility before creation. This, one might also say, is an ontological humility of which the modern subject is ignorant and which is precisely the precondition for dispensing with human sovereignty and mastery over the world (*SA*, 142).

By its very nature, the spirit is integral to a covenant in which the other signatory is the real sovereign. Yet, in a primeval state of existence, it enters this covenant willingly, maintaining its code of ethics in what seems to be

an ideal habitat where the body (*badan*) and its earthly temptations have not yet been born. But once born, the body becomes the locus of desire, thus creating not only a challenge but also a contender to the spirit. That contender is the self, whose function, it seems, is to annul the covenant and erase its effects. The self comes to dominate even the atavistic impulses of the *fiṭra* (*al-mūdaʿa fī dhākiratihi*)—the primordial and original capacity for moral disposition. The self thus draws a curtain behind which the spirit is overshadowed and in front of which the self claims ownership of all things (*kull al-ashyāʾ*). While this appears to be a natural course of human experience, a law of nature that transcends mere modernity, it is actually one that can, in any time and place, be resisted, but only by means of the embodiment of purification. Purification unveils the curtain of the self and brings the spirit back to the fore (*RD*, 277–79).

Purification and all that which worship entails in terms of embodiment amount to Intranscendentalism, the condition of possibility for deputyship (*khilāfa*). "There is no deputyship without worship."[44] If deputyship is an ethical stewardship of the Earth, then worship and its full ethical embodiment are the sine qua non of the right to this stewardship. Which is also to say that this right is conditioned upon the liberation of the spirit from the dominion of the self.

Integral to worship, purification is a performative, constructive utterance (*inshāʾī*). Because of the power of the spirit, the utterance "constructs" actual acts of purification, including what Taha calls "purificatory resistance" (*muqāwama tazkawiyya*). This is not resistance with a view to seizing power, to rebelling, or to instigating or undertaking a revolution; all these are acts of "material violence" (*ʿunf māddī*)[45] that replicate the structures of earthly lordship and political sovereignty. Nor is it a "demonstrative resistance" (*muqāwama burhāniyya*) in which recourse is made to forms of argument and rhetoric of the kind used in electoral campaigns. Rather, purificatory resistance consists of an internal and deep (*jadhrī*) transformation within the individual. It is a cerebral and affective resistance, all at once (*muqāwama wijdāniyya*). It is a way of living worship, loving faith, and embodying pious reserve and humility (*RD*, 295–96). It is a way of forming a new spirit.

Of psychoepistemic and rational-emotive constitution, *muqāwama wijdāniyya* relies on disturbance (*izʿāj*) to do its work. Whereas rebellion and revolution entail tumult, turmoil, violence, and upheaval (*iḍṭirāb*), and whereas elections entail competition between and among powerful

interest groups that determine the fate of everyone else, *disturbance* prods and nudges with a view to moving something from one place or state to another. Since disturbance is inherently geared to promote justice (*ʿadl*), it is consistent in its motion and direction in the pursuit of just ends: it always moves and pushes toward the attainment of a higher state. "Disturbance has no raison d'être other than the good" (*RD*, 296).

Just as the good is the ontological justification of disturbance, there is no disturbance without *inziʿāj*, an internal and reflexive state. If disturbance is of psychoepistemic, rational, and emotive constitution, so is *inziʿāj*. And if this is the case, then disturbance and reflexive disturbance preclude coercion (*ikrāh*). Disturbance is an internal act (*fiʿl dākhilī*) urging one toward worship and retrieval of *fiṭra*, an act that, by definition, pushes away the predilection toward mastery and sovereignty in favor of implanting the deterrents of *ḥayāʾ*. We recall that *ḥayāʾ* is the ethical modesty, restraint, humility, and pious reserve that engenders a fear of losing God's love, not fear of his wrath, a love that permeates the consciousness of the subject and regulates the entire set of relationships with all being, be it rational, animate, or insentient.

Here there is an obvious rejection of all modern forms of political change, be they violent or "democratic." Rebellion and revolution, integral to modern forms of sovereign will,[46] and elections and political accommodations all depend on external mechanisms that perpetuate the concepts of state and politics. Even nonviolent (as they are not in coup d'états and revolutions), apparently peaceful mechanisms, as elections notably are, remain tyrannical in their substance and structure. When electoral fraud is not involved, the strong and powerful still control the scene, and only the wealthy and mighty can enter, or gain from, this process.

All this we know from Marx, but Taha's alternative is compelling. The challenge that disturbance poses is a powerful one, since its exemplar is the emulation of God's justice on Earth. His solution does not go through the route of modes of production, revolution, and the externalities of liberal suffrage. Rather, the standard and mode of disturbance are care of the world, that care which God bestowed on his creatures, all of them. Care here is not just "of the self" or of one's soul. Worship and its functions are therefore geared toward justice, whose atavistic origins, archetype, and exemplarity are God's justice. If "disturbance is the seeking of justice through seeing God's justice," then this "seeing" is not just a prerequisite for the attainment

of justice; it also enjoys a higher rank than the very quest for justice [occupies]" (*RD*, 302). This is so, it seems to me, because once the state of "seeing" (which Taha calls *baṣīra*, not *baṣar*) is attained, the distance to seeking and achieving justice in its global sense of stewardship is short indeed. We can also see in this philosophical articulation a fuller reply to, or critique of, such thinkers as Hans Jonas and Karl-Otto Apel.[47]

VII

Of all forms of so-called political management, the state is temporally the latest and most violent. That it has an exclusive right to exercise violence or threaten with its use is a fact only a few are willing to deny. But Taha goes further. The state "is the most violent sovereign that surrounds society in its entirety" (*RD*, 303). Despite the more recent challenges of globalization to its international hegemony, the state's internal power remains not only intact but ever increasing. The state uses every opportunity and creates every excuse in order to bolster its firm grip over society and its organizations and institutions, its individuals and groups. None of the constitutional checks and balances, nor any other safeguard, has succeeded in averting the injustice and tyranny of the state (*RD*, 303). It may seem that modern man and woman no longer suffer from the obvious and conventional forms of bondage, the traditional slavery prevalent for millennia down to the nineteenth century—and that is for the most part true. But modern man and woman are subjected to significantly more trenchant forms of latent bondage, some of which are even more hidden, though no less pernicious, than others. They range from self-worship to subordination and submissiveness to the market.[48] The modern subject willingly surrenders herself to slavery, all the while under the illusion that she enjoys the highest degree of freedom.[49]

The harm of the state is not limited to the production of willing, mass submission. It coerces the entire social order into forms of worshiping its image and representation. Its physical might is turned in an indistinguishably dualistic fashion to both provide internal, domestic protection and simultaneously exercise oppression. It ensures security, all the while practicing terrorism. It resorts to a variety of methods to fabricate and promote the citizens' worship of it, including the propagation of the myth of popular

sovereignty that is always grounded in the popular and majority consent of its citizens. It fashions educational and cultural institutions and intellectual elites that articulate and perpetuate this worship, thereby ensuring an ideological fortification that does the work of legitimization. Althusser could not have agreed more.[50]

The state furthermore resorts to methods of engendering fear in its populace: fear of weakness of the state and fear of any alternatives to it, both of which are subliminally intended to deter the subject from entertaining any vision in which the state is not wholly present. It employs mass media to spread propaganda and promote its projects, its achievements, and the progress it has accomplished in science, technology, and other fields. In all this, the scientificity and rationality of its methods and the legitimacy and legality of its laws stand paramount and as epistemological givens (here, as well, Bourdieu and Althusser could not have agreed more).[51] As if all this is not enough, it bolsters all this with its so-called educational programs and institutions, parades, independence celebrations, national symbols and icons (e.g., statues in streets and parks and the like), and a host of other activities and festivals that amount to nothing less than acts of worship. This totality of programmatic production of a worshiping population does not have only a positivist, creative side. It has a negatory one as well. It precludes and puts down any and all attempts at envisioning other means of management, despite the fact that management is the single area in human endeavor that most needs constant updating. This "updating" amounts to a constant striving to avert the contamination by human domination and sovereignty of management, for this contamination is an ever-present danger haunting society's well-being (*RD*, 304).

And it is precisely here, in the grey areas of exclusion and ostracizing, where the most important work of disturbance takes place. "A society in which the practice of disturbance has no place is no society at all. . . . Man can live without a government and without political sovereignty, but he cannot exist without family or [communal] human surrounds."[52] It is also from within this environment, which Taha seems to think is the last frontier of the state, that the cracks and fissures permit activities of disturbance. In other words, disturbance can begin to take root and evolve from within the intimate filial structures, the grassroots that begin with family and close-knit social groupings.[53]

Disturbance is an unbounded activity, having no predetermined form, content, or plan, although the desideratum is always clear. Yet, it has certain qualities that seem to define its general character. For instance, it is an enduring and lengthy process that may not bear fruits in any foreseeable future. The business of cultivating and forming new subjectivities is a long-term quest. It is also a detached and detaching activity, where resistance against sovereignty and political domination should not and cannot translate into a desire to replace players while retaining the game and its rules. Disturbance that aims to achieve justice has no place for political competition, for its method and aim are to nudge the ruler and government toward justice (*RD*, 307). Yet, detachment is not uncompromising. Those who find themselves in the service of the system, what I take to be employees like civil servants, whose livelihood depends on their government jobs, must continue their ordinary work, but must do their utmost effort to disturb within the bounds imposed on them, all the while attempting to leave that line of work if at all possible.[54] Furthermore, and in keeping with the open-ended nature of disturbance, the approaches must be innovative, imaginative, and popular, where specialists, elites, or privileged individuals or groups have no place (*RD*, 307). Because it involves the re-formation and revival of the common individual and the ordinary human being, disturbance must necessarily be populist.

Finally, in a series of answers to a hypothetical interlocutor's objections[55] (a frequent practice of our philosopher when concluding major parts of his works), Taha addresses the issue of efficacy. The interlocutor—here apparently of militant leanings—argues that disturbance is ineffective in removing injustice and that military *jihād* is required in order to achieve the desired end: justice. In answer, it immediately becomes clear that disturbance seems a rough, if not close, equivalent to the classical distinction in the Islamic sources between minor and major *jihād*s, the former being the military type. Taha explicitly says that disturbance is "none other than *jihād* itself" (*RD*, 312). In its fundamental and original state, *jihād* is disturbance, and its military equivalent is nothing but a derivative of this overarching and primordial principle, which is why the major *jihād* enjoys the higher rank of distinction.[56] Its formidable weight and importance explains why preparation for it is far more demanding than preparation for the minor, militant *jihād*.[57] Furthermore, minor *jihād* would be more harmful than useful if it were

not grounded (*idhā lam yata'assas*) in major *jihād.* Minor *jihād's* foregrounding goes neither beyond nor deeper than the rational, whereas major *jihād* finds its raison d'être in the sight of the spirit (*al-istibṣār al-rūḥī*). When the *jihād* fighter derives his or her motivations from this sight, his struggle achieves its ultimate goal even if he or she dies in battle. But this is not the case of a *jihādist* whose engagement in battle is grounded in reason alone. Reason here is insufficient. It is, one suspects (as Taha does not elaborate any further on this point), a *jihād* based on denuded reason, not on an enhanced one (*mu'ayyad*).[58]

Following the mainstream premodern doctrine, Taha regards military *jihād* as a defensive activity,[59] namely, the fight against injustice (*dafᶜ al-ẓulm*) and aggression by an enemy force. Major *jihād*, or striving through disturbance, however, is a proactive quest, a transitive activity. In this form of pacifist struggle, it is insufficient to rebuff injustice, to form subjectivities that will resist oppression, tyranny, and the entire range of misdeeds. Rather, it actively seeks to bring about justice and the good, a considerable step beyond mere resistance. If military *jihād* can be achieved, as it can, without the ruler being formed as an ethical subject, the major counterpart cannot (*RD*, 313). It is a misconception that situations requiring military *jihād* are graver and more demanding than those requiring the *jihād* of disturbance. The former struggles against an appearance of reality, one that is materialist and concrete, whereas disturbance or major *jihād* takes on the deeper structures of the oppression that pertains to the spirit. Taha does not tire of repeating that harming the spirit is far more grievous and injurious than harming the body or any material realm, since this latter harm may take place without necessarily wreaking havoc on the spirit and the subject in its totality (*RD*, 313). (It is noteworthy here that Taha published *Su'āl al-ᶜUnf* [*The Question of Violence*, 2017] recently, in which he not only fleshes out the previous arguments, but connects disturbance and major *jihād* with his theory of *ḥiwār*, in which he develops a theory of the ethics of debate and communication between individuals, communities, and "nations.")[60]

In summing up his argument, Taha states:

The role of disturbance in the modern state is to extricate this state from its pertinacious insistence on a [form of] management that hegemonically encloses society in its entirety, which has had increasingly oppressive effects, in terms of both Extranscendentalism and subjugation. And there is no way to push it out

of this management without society regaining its freedom, for society can provide the state with the energies needed to repair its management. There is no way to liberate society from the oppressiveness of the state's sovereignty without reviving the spirit of disturbance in individuals, a spirit that requires patience in the undertaking of purificatory work. It also requires as much autonomy and inventiveness as it does of every individual to undertake his duty of disturbance.

The role of spiritual disturbance is then to undertake the liberation of society from the state, this being for the good of both. For liberating society will renew the spirituality of its members and will allow the release of their creative energies. The state will benefit from this renewal by relinquishing its stubborn insistence (*khurūj min al-jumūd*) on what may be an oppressive management, something that will guarantee its survival due to its ability to adapt to the changing modes of management. Disturbance for justice therefore does not aim to destroy the state as a managing institution, but rather to corral the state, gradually and according to circumstance, to adopt a [form of management] in which worship is not given to created beings, but rather to truth alone. (*RD*, 314, 315)

The foregoing passage lends itself to at least two interpretations. Reforming the state in this manner is either a tactical and strategic move with a long-term ambition to transform it altogether (that is, to bring it to an end) or a genuine approach to improving state governance (that is, to maintaining the state in a reduced but perfectly palatable form). Given the ambiguities in his writings about this point, both interpretations seem equally plausible. The first interpretation has to commend it his decidedly negative view of the modern state as violent, oppressive, and unforgivably suppressive. Yet, a call for radical extraction may be politically imprudent in a state that may remand him as "a radical Islamist." The second is likewise plausible because if reduced to a sort of a night-watchman state, that state, resembling premodern Islamic governance, can accommodate his vision of ethical formation.

In the second half of *Rūḥ al-Dīn*, Taha embarks on an extensive critique of the Islamist movements that have come to dominate the political scene in the Muslim world during the last four decades or so, specifically since Iran was taken over by the Revolution of 1979. He divides these movements into four major types, however much they share common features. They are types because there is no definitive line of separation between or among them.

The first and most distinctive type, drastically different from the rest, is *Ahl al-tasyīs* (the "camp of politicization"), who subsume religion under the rubric of politics. The second is *Ahl al-tadyīn*, the "religionists," the advocates of subsuming politics under religion. Third and fourth, to be dealt with later, adopt the position of "correspondence" (*taṭābuq*) between politics and religion (*RD*, 319).

Clearly, the first camp can hardly be distinguished from that of the secularists, secularism being an untenable position that Taha, as we have seen, refutes and rejects categorically. The second camp builds its case on the fundamental assumption that Islam is a comprehensive and an all-encompassing system of value, since all aspects of human existence and their interconnectedness fall within the mandate of its valuation. This camp's well-known slogan has for long been "Islam is [both] religion and state" (*al-Islām dīn wa-dawla*), a slogan that has come to well-nigh constitute a definition of Islam nowadays, however unjustified and however much it represents a reaction to the secular insistence on separating state and religion. In other words, it is far from a genuine position (*mawqif aṣīl*) vis-à-vis the reality of Islam's comprehensive outlook (*jāmiʿiyyat al-Islām*), for the position is formulated in terms that regard religion as one thing and the state as another, and "Islam" is able to bring both together, making the one complement the other. Yet, this act of lumping the two together is untenable, unless we reduce religion to private beliefs and hold the state responsible for the management of public life, which is precisely what secularism upholds. The governing point being made here is that no qualitative or structural separation can be made between religion and management, between "politics" and religion. They are neither complementary nor indispensable for each other. Rather, they are one and the same in that if management is the business and main function of the state (i.e., defining its raison d'être), then this field of management is both integral to, and enmeshed in, religion (*mutaḍammina fī-hi*). In partial support of this cardinal tenet, our author invokes Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, who argued that *siyāsa* (political management) is either valid or invalid. "When valid, it is neither a partner to the Sharīʿa nor a complement to it (*qasīm*) but effectively an integral part of it. When invalid, it is contrary to and a negation of it."[61]

The Islamists have also propounded the slogan that "the Islamic state is a civic state" ("*al-dawla al-Islāmiyya dawla madaniyya*"), often conjoining it with the slogan "*al-Islām dīn wa-dawla*." They fall into contradiction when

they oppose the claim (often fiercely made, to be sure) that the Islamic state is a religious state (*al-dawla al-Islāmiyya dawla dīniyya*). And so the "Islamic state" is both civic (*madaniyya*) and "of religion" (as in "*al-Islām dīn wa-dawla*"), *but not* religious (*dīniyya*). Their argument in favor of this assertion is that the state, in their conception, deals with religion but is neither clerical nor religious in the sense of a theocracy, their ultimate fear (*RD*, 347). This is certainly a liberal fear as well, by which the Islamists, often unknowingly saturated with liberal values, are haunted. It is the very fear that created the secular state in the first place. It will not do therefore to define the "Islamic state" as either "civic" or "political," because all such secularist pedigrees of the state "explicitly mean" a form of legislation that is "autonomous of the authoritative religious texts," whereas "in constructing the state of Islam," it is "a condition" that this "legislation remains connected, even constrained by, divine revelation."[62] The Islamic model, which chronologically precedes any noticeable European intervention in human history, is exemplified by the formative experience in Medina, when the Prophet was the "head of the state" (*ra'īs lil-dawla*), ruling by what God had revealed unto him (*RD*, 352).

From this language it becomes clear that one needs to disentangle the semantic from the structural in Taha's conception, making important historical distinctions in addition, of which Taha himself is always aware. In *The Impossible State*, I have argued:

> Modern Islamist discourses assume the modern state to be a neutral tool of governance, one that can be harnessed to perform certain functions according to the choices and dictates of its leaders. When not used for oppression, the machinery of state governance can be turned by leaders into a representative of the people's will, determining thereby what the state will become: a liberal democracy, a socialist regime, or an Islamic state implementing the values and ideals enshrined in the Qur'ān and those that the Prophet had once realized in his "mini-state" of Medina. The modern state is then seen by them just as logic was seen by Aristotle and the Aristotelians, namely, as a neutral technique or instrument guiding correct thinking about any issue or problem in the world; until, that is, it was shown centuries after Aristotle, by Muslim intellectuals themselves, that Aristotelian formal logic—and the theory of universals on which it rests— was *inherently* saturated with particular metaphysical assumptions that predetermined the nature of its premises and therefore its conclusions. The very use

of this logic meant an *a priori* acceptance of a certain brand of metaphysics, one that most Muslim intellectuals rejected.

The modern state is no different, for it comes with its own arsenal of metaphysics and much else. It *inherently* produces certain distinctive effects that are political, social, economic, cultural, epistemic, and, no less, psychological, which is to say that the state fashions particular knowledge systems that in turn determine and shape the landscape of individual and collective subjectivity, and thus much of the meaning of its subjects' lives.

As no idea or thought can come into existence outside of a human context, and as no event or act can be conceivable outside time or space, the state—as both abstract thought and concrete practice—is the product of a unique historical experience. As a paradigm of governance, it evolved in Europe and was later nurtured by Euro-America, and subsequently was exported to the colonies and the rest of the world.[63]

The term *dawla* (taken to mean "state" in modernity) is not only a jarring anachronism but a profoundly distorted departure from, if not an epistemically violent break with, its premodern meaning and practice. In the entire range of historical annals and political and other writings, *dawla* meant "the executive branch," the caliphal/sultanic/dynastic enforcer of the Sharīʿa and its institutions and precepts[64] (which Taha certainly recognizes). Yet, in modernity, this "executive authority" came to dominate exclusively, with an absolute authoritarianism to boot, this having taken place on the heels of the colonial destruction of Sharīʿa's institutional checks and balances in the long stretch of the nineteenth century.[65]

In light of the fact that in the entire history of premodern Islam the term *dawla* never meant "state" (because the state itself was not in existence in the first place!), one is compelled to interpret Taha's language liberally, so to speak. Accordingly, in his conception, *there is*, as we have seen, such a thing as "the state of Islam" and even "the Islamic state," yet this "state," despite the designation, does not conform to any modern notion of state. Substantively, its structure and content not only differ from the modern state but, in some fundamental ways, oppose it. To say the least, the modern state is its own community, the marshaling of juridical assaults on the private sphere being nothing but a series of successful attempts to reengineer the traditional community and familial and filial structures according to the state's own political conception of community and institutional affiliation (if one

is to draw on Edward Said's theorization of the filiative/affiliative, which Said himself does not tie to the project of the modern state).[66]

In opposition to this, Taha's "state" seems to begin with the individual, the family, and the community—the basic "social," not fundamentally political, unit, which would remain central to any form of governance. Should we venture any quality of political imagining, Islamic "political" management, if permitted to reach full maturity, would likely consist of small self-ruling moral communities brought together under an unintrusive executive, a night-watchman state that enforces legal-moral norms that are not of its own making. Said norms would then be an expression of communal will, representing the average or median of the communities' self-articulation as moral entities. Furthermore, *this* "Islamic state" would rest on an entirely different concept of sovereignty, and its sources of authority are never based on popular will but rather on a disciplined, communally- and collectively-grounded human interpretation of a body of revealed sources.[67]

All this, needless to say, constitutes both a backdrop to qualifying the meaning of Taha's use of the term and, simultaneously, a critique of the use of the term itself. This, it must be noted, is analogous to the same semantic-substantive rift in the term *modernity* itself, which in Taha's language functions as both a nominalist and a realist conception at once. That Islam has an alternative form of modernity, at variance with and often contradictory to current Western modernity, strongly suggests that "modernity" is not a systemic structure, *a particular mode of conceiving and living in the world, a particular ontology and epistemology*, but rather a vessel that can be filled with various, even contradictory conceptions of self and other, of law and morality, of man and nature. It is thus curious that perhaps the two most important terms in Taha's project, *modernity* and *state*, remain semantically, though not substantively or conceptually, intact, when so many lesser concepts have been subjected to our philosopher's vigorous relabeling.

With the contemporary burden of the state unmitigated, Taha engages the third Islamist camp, the *taḥkīmiyya* or *ḥākimiyya*, a school of thought first elaborated, in Taha's account, by the Indian/Pakistani ideologue Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī.[68] The foundational principle of this school is that God is the only ruler and legislator: hence, his *ḥākimiyya* (lit. sovereignty). Mawdūdī's ideas, Taha argues, have suffered major confusions and misunderstandings at the hands of both supporters and opponents. Some have argued that the Qurʾānic and Sunnaic term *ḥukm*—of which *ḥākimiyya* is a derivative—never meant

political governance, but remained confined to judicial decision (*RD*, 358). Rather, the term that pertained to political management was *amr*. This, Taha rightly insists, is erroneous, for the two terms bear upon the spheres of both the judicial and the political (*RD*, 360, 363).[69] Such erroneous distinctions—the philological consequences of modernity's overwhelming sovereign impulse—have led to severe misinterpretation of the concept of *ḥākimiyya*, which has not managed to cut through to the founding principles and practice of true worship—the worship of the truth (*al-taʿabbud lil-ḥaqq*). True worship requires the fulfilment of two conditions, the ethical and spiritual, that is, those that pertain to ethics and the spirit (as have thus far been defined). The ethical connects *ḥākimiyya* with the true meaning of *āmiriyya*, that conception which issues from the full range of the semantic-conceptual meaning of *amr* (order, decree, legislative will). *Āmiriyya* thus becomes the first and foremost prop (*al-rukn al-awwal*) of *ḥākimiyya*. On the other hand, the spiritual connects *ḥākimiyya* with Intranscendentalism, making the latter the second prop of the former. But what are the fundaments of *āmiriyya*?

Central to Taha's conception, *āmiriyya* begins with understanding the *full and deep significance* of the fact that humans did not and could not bring themselves to existence. Humans, like everything else, were created by a power that possesses the full capacity and absolute competence to create (*khalq*). The second element of this understanding is that humans cannot sustain themselves by their own power and abilities. Human sustenance, at the end of the day, is beyond the pale of human control, however much self-deception modern man entertains concerning this issue. Sustenance (*rizq*) ultimately lies in that which has the absolute power to sustain.

Now, if human existence and sustenance are neither autonomous nor contingent on human capacity and power, and if they are in fact wholly dependent on that which really possesses such powers, then human life, like all other forms of life, is part of an *ordered* world, in the sense not that this world is merely designed in a particular way (i.e., in a particular "order"), but that this way or order is created out of a *prescriptive imperative, a governing principle or set of principles or orders that regulate human and other existence according to a particular plan.*

It seems to me that the English concept of "order" serves Taha's argument better than its Arabic equivalent, for the case he is making is that God's prescriptive, epistemological order constructs an ontological order, making the latter a mere substantiation of the former. The connection between the

epistemological and ontological is not an *event*, an act of creation whereby God makes the world and leaves it as a self-regulating mechanism. Deism has no use for either Mawdūdī or Taha. Rather, there is a continuous connection between the two, whereby such orders never cease to be issued, if for no other reason than to maintain human and other life on Earth. Which is to say that if life continues to exist on Earth, it is by virtue of a continuous chain of orders that will the continuation of life in every atom across the spectrum of its existence.[70] *Amr* thus means a constructive and prescriptive order and an epistemological, ontological, *and* deontological imperative (*taklīfiyyan wa-takwīniyyan*), all at once. "Divine *āmiriyya* is thus the First Principle to which everything belongs."[71]

This is precisely where the theoreticians and practitioners of *ḥākimiyya* went wrong. They missed this foundational link to *āmiriyya*, thereby allowing for human legislation to rule as sovereign. True and genuine *ḥākimiyya* requires the attestation of divine truth in creation, which is another way of saying that Intranscendentalism is indispensable to *ḥākimiyya*. Yet, this conjunction of Intranscendentalism and *ḥākimiyya* cannot obtain without a deep form of worship and purification, a *practice* from which denuded rationality has been expelled in favor of the full adoption of enhanced reason (*ʿaql muʾayyad*; *RD*, 396–97). In yet other words, these practitioners "upheld a spiritual principle that exceeds their capacity for worship" (*RD*, 399). Here we observe the epistemological and epistemologically creative intimacy between worship, habituation, praxis, and ethical techniques, on the one hand, and "political" and worldly practice, on the other. I think it is precisely here, in this very juncture, that the fundamental difference between the "civilization of speech" and the "civilization of deed" is exemplified at the level of political management.

The practice of worship and purification and a modus vivendi that has utterly relinquished domination and sovereignty are thus the necessary components that will transform management and politics beyond recognition, where "management is no longer management and politics is no longer politics" (*RD*, 399–400). The *ḥākimiyya* practitioners have missed "this fact," having constructed a system no different than the one adopted by their own opponents. Theirs remains based on love of power and sovereignty over fellow men, although their positions are exacerbated by their claims that their rule is bolstered by the laws of God. This is why, Taha proposes, one should confront them as one confronts their opponents, fortified by the

knowledge that their failure is inevitable. Little do the *ḥākimiyya* practitioners realize that engaging genuinely and fully with purificatory practice will allow them to innovate new "political" ways to combat politics without their opponents seeing in their activities a threat to their own power and rule, simply because the genus of their project would be entirely different from that of their opponents.[72]

Finally, some Islamists, standing in the fourth camp, have carved for themselves a niche that one might confidently characterize as legalist, where politics is juridified (*tafqīh al-siyāsa*). The principle advocated by the legalists is that governance and political management cannot obtain without *fiqhī* rules, and that to qualify for commanding this management one must have specialist knowledge of these *sharʿī* rules (*RD*, 400). Needless to say, this is a reduction of the principle of *ḥākimiyya*, a reduction that has come to be called the Guardianship of the Jurist, Wilāyat al-Faqīh (*RD*, 401). Of course, Taha suggests, the dissent of a number of major Shīʿī Mullas and their opposition to the *Wilāya* as illegitimate[73] is indicative of the internal crisis surrounding this camp, but the real issue for him is that it suffers from a major deficit in ethical formation and moral thrust. *Āmiriyya*, as we have seen, necessarily requires a thick substrate of ethical forms of worship and purification that must underpin all legal structures and juridicality. Although certain scholars see Wilāyat al-Faqīh as a post-Narāqian development,[74] for which Khomeini was almost exclusively responsible, Taha traces its origins to the early Safavid period when the deficit exhibited itself in the phenomenon of this dynasty surrounding itself with major Shīʿī scholars who spearheaded a campaign to oppress and suppress many *ṣūfī* orders. This superficial and "literalist approach" (*nuzʿa qishriyya/ḥarfiyya*) has characterized Twelver Shīʿism since the sixteenth century, culminating in a conception of *wilāya* in which the Faqīh has become "an adversary of purificatory work and its advocates," Ṣūfīs or not (*RD*, 406–7).

<div style="text-align:center">VIII</div>

Thus, for both the secularists and the religionists (i.e., *dayyāniyyūn*, the general stock of Islamists), management has never transcended the psychological, when it should have been grounded in the world of the spirit. This

limitation continues to frame and ground man's sovereign sense of management, confining his view of the world and of life, and restricting their existential horizons. Modern man and woman therefore stand between two choices: they can adopt either a political management that will inevitably propel them to mastery over creation, or a religious management that will lead them to the worship of the Truth (*Ḥaqq*), a mystical Islamic concept of venerable pedigree.

Taha's struggle then is one that targets the self, whose naturally ingrained cataract constantly militates against the emergence of the spirit. The challenge is to remove the impediment of the self in order to recover the original condition of "witnessing the Truth." Apparently substituting for, but qualitatively different from, the Enlightenment concept of the social contract, the original condition posits a divine offer for all creation to undertake the burden of trusteeship over the Earth, an offer apparently refused by all, with the exception of humans. Acceptance, however, encompasses two discrete elements, namely, original choice (foregrounding acceptance) and undertaking of trusteeship (the substantive content of the offer/contract).[75] Freedom of choice is thus a human attribute attached to man's very creation, which extends from man's transcendental origins down to his ontological manifestation.

Being a trustee then entails that both practices of worship and management revert back to, and emanate from, the principle of divine trust. Which is the same as saying that trusteeship (*amāna*) possesses two facets, two sides of the same coin, depending on the perspective: from the perspective of transcendence, it is called worship, but from a perspective that relates to this world, it is called management. Trusteeship entails both, aggregately and separately. In one important sense, both of these practices may be regarded as synonymous, for both bear the connotation and significance that human kind has *elected to undertake the preservation of divine precepts*, not just as a formal matter but also as internal states attesting to deeper meanings that expand the existential horzons.[76] In the very term *ikhtiyār* ("electing to" or "choosing") there is the etymological connotation (*Kh.Y.R.*) of "choosing the best" (*khayr* = goodness) or what is thought to be "the best" under any particular circumstance. Both the benchmark and the desideratum of "choice" are thus driven by the concept of good deed (*ʿamal ṣāliḥ*) and its foregrounding of Intranscendence (*RD*, 451–53). Yet, choice also entails, in the strictest

logical sense, "the attainment of a sense of responsibility."[77] To accept an offer implies both a willingness and an ability to rise up to the obligations that the contractual relationship engenders.

Human beings therefore live within these ascending and descending relationships and constitute a continuum within the spectrum of creation. Against secular humanism, Taha argues that the chief characteristic of the secular self is its attributive force of ownership. In the millennial Islamic conception, God is the one who truly owns everything, whereas human kind owns things in the world only derivatively, even metaphorically. By contrast, the modern religionist has been saturated with a concept of the self that thinks ownership is an exclusive and private acquisition, namely, ownership acquired (*muktasab*) by the self and for the self and one from which no other can benefit. To say "I have done this and so it is mine" is to say that "If I have done this, then no one else can be entitled to it." This is not all, however. Integral to this proprietary attribution is the concept of *taḥaqquq*, whereby the affirmation to exclusivity of ownership brings about fulfillment and reward. Serving the self and its desires and wishes thus translates into a situation in which that self "imprisons and enslaves" its owner (*RD*, 459–60). In Taha's discourse, one can confidently argue, the tyranny of the self has become one of the structural features of modernity, whether it takes a religionist or a secular form.

Trusteeship is therefore a relationship existing between and among three elements: the thing (*res*) making up the trust (*wadīʿa*), the subject that entrusts (*mūdiʿ* = God), and the object who is trusted, namely, humankind. The subject places in the hands of the object a thing that he, the subject, owns, for the purposes of custody and care, for he is ultimately its true owner. He is the true owner because he also owns the trustee, the *real object*. The latter therefore cannot, in the true and full meaning of the term, own anything. Earthly ownership is not just derivative and metaphorical; it is also tentative (*RD*, 473).

Trusteeship consists of two forms: maintenance and care (*ṣiyāna* and *riʿāya*). Maintenance means the preservation of the trust as it was given, "without exposure to harm." It is man's duty "to do his best to avert such harm." Averting harm does not constitute an act outside the meaning of maintenance. Nor is it a part of care, for care is an *additional* dimension of trusteeship. Care presupposes a set of rules that must be observed, because

within the concept of care there is the presumption of the human use of the trust. In fact this use or permission to use (*idhn bil-taṣarruf*) is the raison d'être of the trust itself. "Permission" here acquires a legal connotation, for it too is integral to the original contractual state. *Permission was given precisely because the rules of care are in place.* At the same time, these rules are the conditions of possibility for "ownership" and use of the trust, both of which are always assumed to be necessary for promoting man's best interests. Yet, underlying all this is the categorical understanding that whatever use is made of the trust—and man has a wide range of freedoms—"the rights of the divine truster must be fully observed."[78]

Trusteeship therefore represents a spiritual connection in which outward ethics is grounded in an inward ethical counterpart, rendering the externality of man's being connected with the internality of connection with God, just as existential obligation would be grounded in Intranscendental obligation so that the right of choice is coupled and intertwined with the necessity of obligation (*RD*, 476). Which is to say that choice is not an unbounded and autonomous act but one that navigates through the various options inherent in, and thus defined by, the trust itself (*RD*, 478). Here, recognition of bounty triggers a sense of gratitude, which guides, as it must, any course of rational thinking and action in the management and care of the trust.[79] The tension between freedom of choice (the Kantian free rational will) and the duties of trusteeship is resolved by the recognition that the former ultimately remains relative (*nisbī*). Man can opt for any course of action he sees fit as long as the rules of maintenance and care are neither broken nor compromised.

To sum up, in Taha's view,

The case (*daʿwā*) for trusteeship does not separate worship from management or, if you will, religion from politics in the manner propounded by the secularists. Nor does it bring them together as the religionists argue. Rather, the trusteeship position anticipates a deeper level that precedes connection and disconnection, namely, the level of original unity (*waḥda aṣliyya*) whose cradle is the world of transcendence, a unity represented in trusteeship that man bore by his choice. There is neither connection nor disconnection between worship and management insofar as trusteeship or choice is concerned. Unlike the secularist principle of positivism, the principle of trusteeship requires that humankind be not

a sovereign, but a trusted agent who ceaselessly cares for the rights of the trust. And contrary to the religionist principle, the trusteeship principle also requires that humankind be not only inseparable from the divine but also committed to the constant practice of purification. (*RD*, 491)

There is no politics without trusteeship. This is where the concept of management begins and ends.

Epilogue

A New Concept of the Human

I

If Jābrī, Arkoun, and the bulk of so-called reformers and intellectuals since Bustānī and Riḍā have viewed Islamic and Arab thought through the prism of crisis, Taha inverts this vision inside out and upside down.[1] If this thought is engulfed with problems, as no one would deny, then these are not intrinsic problems but ones genealogically caused by exogenous forces. The problems plaguing this thought originate in the Muslim world's vulnerability to Western hegemonic forms of knowledge. The effects of hegemony tell a story of loss, of discontinuity, and of (inconclusive) rupture. Whereas Jābrī and his ilk have sought to create or justify rupture (*qaṭīʿa*), Taha seeks the venues of connectivity and continuity (*waṣl*), an approach that is central to his philosophy. For Taha, therefore, Jābrī's concept of *azma* (crisis) exists only in the latter's mind. If there is an *azma* to be found anywhere, and if its sources are to be identified, then it can be located in the West, in the way Euro-America has put the universal and presumably transhistorical principles of modernity into skewed practice. The "skewing" occurs at the moment in which man installs himself as lord over creation, engaging in a self-divination that reifies him as an end to himself. In Taha, there is no irremediable narrative of loss, of crisis; rather, it is a narrative of recovery, adjustment, and critical rehabilitation. Yet, while he vies with the Islamists' crude recovery of the past, he challenges the Western acceptance of the entrenched paradigms of

thought and practice as they stand, hence his incisive critique of the works of what are otherwise his potential allies, such as Habermas and Jonas.

Pitting Taha against Jābrī does not yield only a fruitful comparison of two considerable intellectuals. This comparative exercise is, on its own, an undoubtedly worthwhile intellectual undertaking. But here I intend it to do another kind of work. With his encyclopedic erudition and popularity in the Arab world, Jābrī's work captures a wide and entrenched representation of a modernized and modernizing Arab thought, if not a high point, a culmination, of a trend that began at the end of the nineteenth century. In Jābrī's scheme, which takes for granted and operates on a large terrain of the *turāth*'s landscape, the Islamic tradition is divisible into three constellations, roughly represented by the demonstrative/philosophical, the legal/linguistic, and the mystical/gnostic. This is Jābrī's order of priorities. In his narrative, the gnostic is the repressed and the irrational, as much as it is the magical and the legendary. In other words, to him gnosis is useless and thus beyond redemption. It represents the primitive past, the anthropologically tribal and atavistic. By contrast, the demonstrative, the emblematic Rushdian legacy that formed an integral basis of the European Renaissance, is claimed to be the ultimate parameter and domain of truth, and if there is anything to be salvaged in the legal/linguistic, it is to be salvaged on terms of this demonstrative domain. This, as we have seen throughout, has been a typical attitude and approach of the long twentieth century toward things Islamic: "reform" and revision are always seen to rest on an act of inversion, whereby the marginal and exceptional in Islamic history are now made to stand as the paradigmatic concepts and central domains. If Islam is to be "reformed" and remain "Islamic," then an Islamically defined concept must center and frame that reform. This operation inevitably requires the marshaling of the exceptional in tradition as the central in the modern, which is to say that the operation consists of turning things on their heads. An analogy in point would be the hypothetical of a group of capitalists who, aiming to reform capitalism with a view to strengthening it, make a robust concept of social responsibility and socialist redistribution of wealth the cornerstone of the system, the highest priorities to which all other considerations of reform must conform. In Jābrī's scheme, as well as in the great majority of "reformist" narratives since Riḍā, the tail always wags the dog.

Taha does not tackle this narrative structure head-on, nor does he put the matter in the terms I have just described. Instead, he deploys no less than

a whole system of thought that displaces the entirety of this structure. The full weight of his project amounts to a radical inversion of Jābrī's triadic account, this bearing, as I will argue, tremendous implications for the forms of knowledge that inhabited premodern Islam and that provide, to say the least, heuristic value for a critique of modern forms of discourse. The inversion is therefore not merely a critique of Jābrī and what he represented as a leading Arab liberalizer, but in fact goes to the heart of the epistemic constitution of modern forms of knowledge as materialist and political phenomena.

Looked at from a bird's-eye view, the totality of Taha's project *demands and achieves* a radical reversal of Jābrī's triadic narrative. And there is no better place to witness this reversal than in Taha's central concept of rationality. Denuded reason, a feeble and potentially misguided venue, turns out to be structurally embedded in instrumentalism, and inextricably associated with demonstrative arguments, which, on their own (hence their denudedness), can convert means to ends, leading, as they did over the twentieth century, to achieving ends contrary to their initially declared intentions. Denuded reason, a Rushdian throwback, is precisely what is to be critiqued, to be shed. It is so denuded, Taha could have easily said, that it is entirely myopic.

Less objectionable, guided reason seems to correspond to what both Jābrī and Taha see as a middle-of-the-road option, although Taha distinctly regards it as a form of reason that avoids the pitfalls of its denuded counterpart. Nonetheless, guided reason can never achieve the status of the enhanced variety. When all is said and done, enhanced reason is none other than the mystico-epistemological venue of seeing and articulating the world. It is one that derives from, though it does not seem to entirely replicate, the gnostic, *ṣūfī*, and mystically pious ways of *living* the *turāth* tradition (insofar as it is the best way in which this tradition can be reconstructed). The foregoing chapters have shown, I think, that enhanced reason is not just a Tahan prescriptive method of how one should reason about things in the world; far more significantly, it is the method by which Taha himself in effect constructs his entire system of thought. His inversion of Jābrī's inversion of the world that was premodern Islam becomes at once both a postmodern critique and a philosophical system standing on its own. That Taha's mystical philosophy is a radical departure from the course of Islamic reformism since Bustānī and Afghānī is beyond doubt;

that it represents a critical voice, rare since the beginning of the Enlightenment, is even less in doubt.

Yet, we would be amiss to stop at the characterization of his project as a mystically anchored philosophy whose chief concerns are the spiritual and ethereal. An antidote to secularism, materialism, liberalism, and anthropocentrism, Taha's project is also profoundly political, and this not in the usual sense of politics as institutional ways of managing society and polity, or the public debates that accompany such arrangements. Rather, his project is political in the sense that no sphere of human life can be segregated from another, and that if all spheres are mere varieties within a single unity, then there is no distinction between politics and everything else. And if politics is everywhere, and it no doubt is, then it must, in Taha's system, succumb to a higher order of things, to higher priorities that render politics subordinate. If these priorities are paradigmatically ethical, then politics too, as a system of macromanagement (*tadbīr*), must be ethicized.

The inversion of the triad in Taha's work restructures politics by way of such subordination. One could plausibly argue that there is a distinctly little similarity, if there is one at all, between a political system grounded in negative liberty and another grounded in positive liberty. Yet, the use of the concept of positive liberty to characterize both the Berlinian and the Tahan articulations of it may not be apt at all. The inversion of the triad in favor of a mystical outlook on life as a totality means the adoption of a robust concept of positive liberty, one that is not subject to state imperatives or ideological programs. This type of liberty is what Isaiah Berlin feared most. But Taha's concept, in sharp contrast, does not seem to assume the state, and one is furthermore tempted to draw the conclusion that he, in the final analysis, rejects the modern state as both concept and practice. From *this particular* perspective, Taha may share with Berlin a rejection of modern forms of positive liberty, but the reasons for Taha's rejection are, I think, different.

Berlin rejects positive liberty because it competes with negative liberty and challenges, in a Cold War environment, the liberal way of life.[2] We can confidently predict that Taha's rejection is not one of principle, which Berlin's is, but rather one of quality. We therefore may distinguish two subconcepts of positive liberty, the first of which I shall call, invoking Althusser's notion of Ideological State Apparatus, the *ideological concept of positive liberty*, the kind Berlin opposed, whereas the second may be designated as the *individuated concept of positive liberty*. This latter is individuated because it

precludes the interference of an external entity that consciously, deliberately, politically, and ideologically dictates the terms of formation of subjecthood. Rather, it rests on the individual subject's initiative, which is to say that its range and depth vary from one person to another. It is the individual who is the only and final judge of whether or not to engage in the process of subjective formation, and the degree to which this engagement is to be performed. Because it is of the essence that it is a process in which *one operates on oneself*, individuated positive liberty is an autonomous and relative field of play. It is precisely here where this form of liberty distinguishes and distances itself from its ideological counterpart, which assumes the individual to operate within a collectivity of some kind.

The individuated concept is not a mere theory or utopia. A historian can convincingly show that this concept had a venerable intellectual pedigree and was put to a thick social practice in Muslim societies (as well as in others) across the centuries and regions, having been brought to an effective end when colonialism destroyed much of the Islamic way of life in the nineteenth century. Taha largely revives, but does not invent, the thrust of this concept.

Yet, the revivification of this concept in the age of liberalism on such an enormous philosophical scale is nothing short of audacious and courageous. Should it succeed, the concept of individuated positive liberty would upend liberalism, changing it beyond recognition, and, most importantly, subverting the materialist and capitalist basis of its social existence; put differently, to adopt it is to change the order of things, to change the very epistemic order of liberalism itself and with it its subjective secular constitution. Obviously, the full ramifications of this concept entail the transformation of the two legs on which liberalism stands: capitalism and the political order (of democracy, liberty, elections, and so on) that is installed to protect and promote the culture of capitalism and the materialist foundations on which it stands. To put it yet more directly, the concept of individuated positive liberty produces the subject who would inherently and intrinsically refuse, if not shun, the *subjectivity* of negative liberty and, with it, the entire economic and political system that sustains it.

Nor is this all. The ramifications of Taha's concept of positive liberty run deeper, for if we are to appreciate the full consequences of its potentiality, the concept is productive of a new concept of the human. This, I think, is where the major thrust of Taha's philosophy lies. If the ambition and thus

general tenor of his project are to ethicize modernity and to lay down the foundations for an ethical Muslim modernity, the *specific* and *carefully crafted* route he pursues in order to achieve his goal is not a program of moralizing, an alternative that at once replicates and competes with what René Guénon described as the "moralism" of "Western barbarity."[3] This all-too-common approach (pursued by Arkoun, Jābrī, Soroush, Abū Zayd, and countless others active in the last century) amounts to nothing more than changing the players while keeping the rules of the game intact. Taha's proposal is a radical and massive overhaul of the rules themselves, of the way we play in this world. For if Foucault is right that the subject must remain at the front and center of our gaze in critiquing and resisting, then it is the subject and her inner psychoepistemic and spiritual constitution that remain Taha's most immediate goal and target. While Foucault—ultimately a prisoner in a secularist ward—was at a loss as to how (even) to begin resisting and fashioning subversivity,[4] Taha, drawing on over a millennium of *actual* historical experience (both material and intellectual), deploys a blueprint that *heuristically* reconstructs the subject-antidote (or antidote-subject?) who is the cure for what Charles Taylor called modernity's malaise.[5] One may even confidently characterize this blueprint, this project, by saying that it is not as much etiological as it is curative and, especially, palliative.

It is also a methodologically conscious choice that Taha's palliatives are deliberately antisystemic, deriving from sources that lie outside the modernist systems of knowledge and psychoepistemology. In the entirety of his discursive project, and nearly on every page of his vast oeuvre, Taha has made good on his insistent promise that there can be no successful palliative that epistemologically derives from the same system that causes the disease. Genealogically, then, the palliatives' provenance must always hail from a qualitatively different pedigree than the one generating both the disease and perhaps even its etiology. In depending on a wide array of French and other European critics, Taha clearly accepts, at least partly, certain forms of modern etiologies (Habermas, Ellul, Jonas, and others), but when he comes to offer solutions, we have seen him initiate a radical departure from these otherwise remarkable voices. I say "partly," because Taha's etiology refuses to frame itself within the secular, resorting, in the end, to a psychoepistemology anchored in a narrative of man's createdness within, and dependence on, a world of interconnections and unity.

This radical departure, I ought to repeat, is squarely anchored in what I have just called a new concept of the human. This human is not just "anti-Constitutional," to invoke Latour's expression, nor is it one who faces the challenged notion of the distinction between "nature and culture" by merely overcoming the problem of "representation" (again Latour's notion).[6] In calling for bridging the gap between Culture and Nature, in calling on us to respect and give Nature its due rights, and in advocating the noble notion of the "Parliament of Things," Latour continues, like Jonas and others, to navigate at the surface, for he does not offer any nonsystemic plan for a new subject, a new concept of the human. Latour's concept of the human who is to *conceive and perform* the "Constitutional" acts of the "Parliament" largely remains the very modern subject who has performed and perfected the art of the Latourian "anti-Constitutionality,"[7] a subject whose cerebral and emotive "constitution" and outlook on the world as a disenchanted existence have been unwavering, if not governing. In other words, Latour's subject continues to form and be formed by the logic of modern habitus. Latour's is an etiology without genuine and real palliative, and it continues to lag, like that of Jonas, at least one crucial step behind, precisely because it insists on denying the created integrality of man to, and his utter dependence on, the world. To keep pace with the post-Taylorian malaise of modernity, philosophy, anthropology, and the numerous other "disciplines" must engage not just in etiology (which continues to fall short of the task), but mainly in palliatives. I think we may charge Taha for unduly indulging his early project in etiology, but there is little justification for any such charge in light of his later works. *Rūḥ al-Dīn* and the very recent *Dīn al-Ḥayāʾ*, among others, are magisterial contributions to a project that courageously attempts to forge a new concept of the human. As I have argued elsewhere, when invoking Max Scheler and Ghazālī (as representatives of larger trends), the call for the mystical *ardo amoris* is not just the prerogative or responsible imaginary of the religiously minded.[8] A new concept of the human must be able to accommodate the entire range of differences. A rationality that is able to transcend modern instrumentalist and materialist logic is arguably amenable to subsuming a large variety of positions that may not all be religiously inclined. Taha surely does not go this far, and in fact may object to my distentions and extensions, but his philosophy is rich and dense enough, I think, to accommodate the liberties I take here.

II

Deriving from and building on Taha's theorization of the subject, I argue that we can speak of particular qualities that characterize the new concept of the human. These characteristics are to be distinguished from the techniques that are indispensable for forming this human, this subject. The characteristics are the minimal essentials that make such a human new, make her who she will be. As an antidote to the modern malaise, each of these characteristics are deemed essential because each performs, along with the others, a particular task, the totality of which makes up the condition of a sufficient palliative. If essences are involved in this narrative, it is because the malaise dictates and requires them as a matter of necessity. Change the malaise, and the essences will in turn change. Since the diagnostic (read, critique) undeniably operates within a specific and fairly well-determined etiology, we can then comfortably speak of a set of essential characteristics.

Yet, characteristics, as I just intimated, are not to be confused with techniques, for the latter is the variable method by which a necessary characteristic is achieved. To continue with our biological terminology, technique belongs to a family of habituating acts, namely, works and disciplining praxes that produce a habitus, however and whatever that habitus may be. Althusser has shown us the workings of the ideological state habitus in producing a particular kind of subject, whereas Aristotle, Ghazālī, Mauss, and Bourdieu have articulated various notions of what may be called the ethical habitus. In all of these variations, including the Althusserian, the *doxa* operates in the same, if not identical, fashion.

Techniques are *contingent necessities*, which is to say that they are indispensable and essential as family and genus but contingent and thus mutable as a species. The family of *habituating* acts and praxes are concomitant with all human groupings: every society or socially constituted aggregation of individuals needs, and cannot live without, some kind of technique. Genera, however, make up the spectrum of family membership. As an example in point, two such genera are the modern (paradigmatically exemplified in the Althusserian ideological) and what may be called here, for lack of a better term, the traditional Asian. The latter is in turn divisible into a number of species, including the Islamic, the Jewish, the Hindu, the Taoist, and the Buddhist. The realm of techniques, precisely because they are techniques, is vast, although conceivably exhaustible. My point is that technique

as a species is the sphere of ingenuity, capable of creating *and re-creating* modes of habituating praxes and technologies of embodiment. My other point is that the *modernist* forms of habituation (ranging from the ideological-Althusserian to the disciplinarian-Foucauldian) stand as coequal genera, and not a different species under the same genus.

Now, taking for granted that every subject must be located within, and formed by, one type of habitus or another, a new concept of the human will be said, in light of modernity's specific crises,[9] to enjoy a number of essential characteristics, all of which are interrelated and constitute a single interconnected whole (a matter I will return to). A point of entry to this whole is the characteristic of antimaterialism, generally defined as a critical and systematic transgression against divination of the material world, where matter, including the human as *materially conceived*,[10] has been endowed with the highest values. Materialism is therefore not just a physically disposed attitude to the world, but also, and in fact primarily, a metaphysical conception of material reality as one of "brute," "inert," and "stupid" matter (to cite Robert Boyle's famous descriptors).[11] This metaphysics also rests on a potent conception of instrumentalism that systemically makes a habit of confusing ends with means, converting the former into the latter and rendering the modern telos an ever-unattainable desideratum.

The antimaterialists, by contrast, recognize higher principles as ever binding, precisely because these principles are not subject to the discretion and whim of materialism. This is not to say that materiality should or can be abolished from the world, for the world is, after all, made of matter. But the world is obviously not just matter, nor is it just the total sum of all its (materialist) parts. Nor does matter signify, in this conception, the "brute" and the "stupid." Whether at the spiritual metaphysical level or the material physical plane, sentient and insentient life lives in and with matter. Every living organism is matter and requires materiality for survival. Yet, this is only one of the grounds of existence, in an infinitely more complex universe of forces and spirits. The antimaterialist therefore recognizes that in this complex existence materialism is no more than a means to an end. And the two are neither twain nor to be confused. Matter is always subservient yet still integral to a higher order of existence that is made of first-order ethical principles.

This much is readily derivable from Taha's thought. An antimaterialist conception would thus shun capitalism along with its modus vivendi and

modus operandi, namely, the corporation, multinational or otherwise. It would also shun the political structures that are installed to make materialism and capitalism possible and hegemonically operative, which is also to say that capitalism as a *performative metaphysics* would be rejected on principle. Insofar as I know, Taha does not attend to these materialist forms, although he has much to say, rather indirectly, about their social and philosophical implications. Like colonialism, capitalism in his work is not (thus far) an integral philosophical unit of critical analysis. If we are to keep in mind the immediate effects of modernity's malaise, then an antimaterialist critic must uphold, as a matter of principle, a systematic resistance to modern forms of capitalism. For capitalism, as a metaphysics and pervasive and dominating *attitude* (not just as an economic form), constitutes and not only represents the full effect of materialism.[12] An irrational greed, capitalism was ab initio integral to the rise of an instrumentalized materialist outlook on the world, and simultaneously concomitant with the effects generated by the materialist attitudes in the world.

In my account of materialism, the foundational component of sovereignty (the second characteristic) is lacking. The lack, however, merely intends to segregate sovereignty for special attention. The new concept of the human therefore presupposes a subjectivity that is characterized by a categorical absence and total negation, in its very constitution, of sovereignty. Yet, this is not to suggest that sovereignty is substantively separable from materialism, for both go hand in hand. There is no materialism without sovereignty, just as there is no sovereignty without materialism in its most expansive epistemological and metaphysical meaning. In fact, they are concomitants, since materialism presupposes, and lives on, sovereignty, which is to say that materialism is made ontologically possible by an unbounded form of sovereign epistemology.

In a recent work, I have dwelt on the concept of Orientalism as an arena of thought that exhibits the same "genetic" features that structurally constitute nearly the entire range of modern knowledge we have come to subsume under the various academic disciplines.[13] In this story, the rise of a new, unprecedented form of human sovereignty marks a commensurate rupture in human history, one that ushered in unique forms of colonialism, hegemony, and destruction. This is to say that the unbounded materialism of modernity and its subject must be seen as ontologically subordinate to, though inseparable from, sovereignty, for it was the latter that gave rise to

what Taha describes as "love of mastery and [of] control," the prerequisite to materialism.

If by now this is clear, then it is not sufficient for a new concept of the human to entertain, or settle for, the resisting subject, the subversive agent who refuses "who we are," "what we are."[14] To become performative, refusal must *embody* itself in a *normative substrate*, a substructure of thought, action, and feeling that systematically and systemically embed resistance and refusal in a *habituated psychoepistemology* of humility and modesty. Taha's chosen term for this is *ḥayā'*, a philosophical term of variegated and intertwined meanings. I take *ḥayā'* to include, in the most profound of ways, the concept and feeling of gratitude,[15] without which no modesty before, or respect of, anything is ever possible. Nor is there gratitude without humility, or humility without modesty. If refusal and resistance are negative approaches, then humility, modesty, and gratitude are the positive, nondefensive, and self-confident modi vivendi of being in the world. A new concept of the human thus generates a subject who does not recognize sovereignty and who cannot conceive of herself as being sovereign. Here, the Kantian trio of free rational will (freedom, rationality, and willing) has no place in the architecture of the new subject, who perceives herself as devoid of the impulse to mastery and the quest for power.

Yet, to say that the new subject "conceives herself to be devoid of this impulse" is to overstate the point and misrepresent it. The new human would be *intrinsically* incapable of this mode of cognition, for to be able to conceptualize the meaning of sovereignty, mastery, or domination is to already be engaged with them in one way or another. To think them, to know them, is to entertain their possibilities and potentialities. For it is true that cognition is not only consciousness of the possible but also an inroad to the performative.

It is my argument then that resistance and refusal, a characteristic Foucauldian duo that follows on the heels of critique, are insufficient for producing the new concept of the human I am trying to outline here.[16] What is needed instead is a new habitus and, more precisely, a new form of embodiment and ethical cultivation that permit no place either for the "love of mastery and domination" or for the *very cognition* of these forms of sovereignty. A new concept of the human thus demands new forms of acculturation, education, and upbringing. The forms in this new configuration take it for granted that the subject is formed by humility, modesty, and gratitude,

all of which are not mere nouns and derivative descriptors, but effectively performative as technologies of the self, or, as Taha would have it, "of the soul." They are not, in yet other words, mere qualities that we may preach or admire, but they rather stand as constitutive of a world of values in which the subject is born and nurtured, systemically, systematically, and constitutionally. Humility is never timidity or meekness, nor is it servility or obsequiousness.[17] It is, like modesty, a world in which pride and vanity have no central room for maneuver. If pride and vanity are human quali- ties, which they undoubtedly are, then they are to be suppressed and kept at bay, just as we, in the modern condition, abhor dishonesty, cunning, and the like. If modesty is unpretentiousness, moderation, and simplicity, then gratitude is appreciation, thankfulness, and a deep feeling of indebtedness.[18] The Tahan *ḥayā'* is therefore not only the antidote to sovereignty and arro- gance, those qualities that define the modern subject; it is, in effect, a new habitus, a performative technology, and an uncompromised way of living *in* the world, *not above it.*

Nor is "living *in* the world, *not above it,*" just a virtuous quality that makes for a merely desirable way of experiencing the world. Living *in* the world— our fourth characteristic—is nothing short of a psychoepistemology, dictat- ing *how* one *qualitatively* lives, and the full meaning of living in the world. A new concept of the human recognizes the world as a unity, where all things, sentient and insentient, stand in an interconnected whole. This, again, is not just an outlook on the world, one that can be adopted from one external remove or another. Rather, it is an inner, formative conception of reality, a view from within, an outlook *integral* to, and internally embedded in, a con- ception of the world as one formed by interconnections and continuity.

To say that the world is continuous is to conceive of a fabric of being that makes everything one does, every omission and commission, relevant, and thus effectual, to everything else. It is also to say that because *this* living in the world is a psychoepistemology, continuousness and continuity are sub- stantively made of an ethical fiber, endowed with an *epistemology and ontol- ogy of responsibility.* "Epistemologically and ontologically," because there is no act, no speech, that can escape this cycle of continuity, this cycle of inter- connection. In other words, whatever one does or says, or does not do or say, has an effect on something, ad seriatum, around it, both conceptually and existentially, and if ethics is the way in which we speak of a genuine

concept of responsibility, then everything that is said, done, or altogether omitted is inevitably engulfed and judged by this ethics. Responsibility then cannot be grounded in a rhetoric whose foundations are laid by anthropocentrism or secular humanism, for these have proven incapable of a genuine solution to many of the problems generated precisely because of them.[19] Responsibility is not just speech and theory and knowledge; nor is it just actionable procedure. Responsibility is praxis, a habituation, a psychoepistemology, and a habitus, all at once.

This is the meaning of the obliteration of any qualitative distinction between theory and theoretical knowledge, on the one hand, and praxis, on the other. If the world is an interconnected whole, then it is impossible to escape the dialectic between the two. To linearly speak of theoretical knowledge as the prerequisite for praxis is to navigate at the surface; it is effectively to create a disjuncture between the two, for as long as praxis is made to stand in a relationship of *consequential* concurrence with theory, praxis will never be able to keep up with its theoretical antecedents. The differential is not just a matter of quantity; rather, it represents a qualitative disparity between ideal talk (as in "culture talk") and the techniques of praxis that remain disconnected from ideas and speech. And because of the disjuncture between the two, praxis as an ethical cultivation is precisely that which suffers. It is one of Taha's fundamental premises that the very act of engagement in praxis is a psychoepistemically productive process, for praxis itself deepens the psychoepistemic experience, increasing it both quantitatively and qualitatively. Inasmuch as theory is necessary for engagement in praxis, this latter is dialectically productive of theoretical knowledge. To be distinguished from generic practice, "thick practice" (*al-ʿamal al-thaqīl*; *SA*, 26) is always ethical because it ensues from an equally "thick knowledge," that which has been generated by the processes of enhanced reason. The dialectical interaction and therefore unity of theory and praxis are then the fifth characteristic of this concept of the human.

Enhanced reason distinguishes itself from denuded, instrumentalist reason by its consequent "thick" insistence on the continuity of being, that is, insistence on the habituated outlook that the human is at one with the world. This human sees herself standing in a series of equally created beings, all deserving of respect precisely due to the indomitable fact of equal createdness. Yet, this equality is distinguishable. The fact that the mare and its

foal are equal members of the Equidae never entails assigning them the same functions or responsibilities. Just as the mare is under the natural, instinctive duty of caring and attending to its foal, the human is under the primordial obligation of universal stewardship. This is the natural lot and burden of humanity, just because it has been assigned, in the nature of things, to bear the unique weight of ethics. This is why Taha justifiably refuses the identification of the quiddity of humanity as a merely rational species, for modern rationality as a denuded form of reason has proven, especially in modernity, capable of turning things into their opposites. It is, after all, modern rationality that has justified and performed genocides, environmental destruction, and innumerable forms of calamity.

The concept of continuity and continuousness in the world thus *demands* bearing the burden of ethical responsibility of stewardship. But unlike Jonas and his likes, who seem incapable of comprehending the *depth* of the status of equal createdness, Taha cannot allow for this massively interconnective link to be missed. Humility and gratitude are thus not just states of consciousness; they are so crucial precisely because the human species is both burdened and privileged (read, blessed) by the duty of trusteeship and stewardship, both of which translate into care of the world. To be a steward is to live in a world that is psychoepistemically saturated with humility and gratitude; it is to live in a world that does not know, much less recognize, mastery and love of domination. This absence is in fact a productive presence, for there is no empty space left by the unknowability of mastery. The space is rather an already-full mental landscape that understands the necessity and implications of what it means to be a created thing. This is the link missed by the otherwise meritorious contributions of Jonas and others. The very appreciation of the meaning of createdness, of man's contingency, ephemerality, death, and ultimate insignificance, is precisely the necessary "thick" link that Jonas and others like him have overlooked. But as creatures of the secularized liberal habitus, they have also missed the significance of praxis and psychoepistemology in ethical habituation. Jonas's fear can never, on its own, accomplish much. It is for the most part unproductive. When the subject engages a praxis of ethical formation, she effectively engages a set of signifiers that bring together the communal and divine good as a unified world of referents. It is to understand the full meaning of the summum bonum. Which is to say that the good is not a constrained notion of human

welfare, but one that brings the individual, the community, and God into one interconnected whole.

For Taha the trio (man, community, God) is defined in Islamic terms, but terms that enter into a never-ceasing dialogue with the world that surrounds what he wants to see—I think somewhat problematically—as an "Islamic modernity." Yet, the substantive contents of the trio and the praxis entailed in generating the necessary habitus and technologies of ethical formation are there for humanity at large to digest and implement, "each to his own." If Islam, like all traditional or secular religions, arrogates to itself an especially ethical place in the world, it also insists that God created "for each . . . ['nation' or community] a moral law and way of life."[20] But there is no escaping the qualitative construction of the trio, which must obtain if humanity is to truly exit what he calls the ills of the Western application of modernity. That Taha may have exaggerated the qualitative difference between spirit and application is a matter that I need not rehearse here. That the solution resides in the desperate need for a new concept of the human is a testimonial not only to the irreparable crises of modernity, but also to the bankruptcy of the very structure of modernity's ethical and epistemic constitution.

The ultimate challenge to both Taha and his interlocutors then resides in the last part of the trio, which is to say that the entire problem squarely rests not only on the place of the human on Earth but, more fundamentally, on the relationship of the human to his ontological surrounds. For it is this relationship, with all its implications and effects, that will determine the quality of the subject—the quality of not just "who we are" but *what we must become.* As I have argued in the context of what I take to be the crises of modern knowledge, the secular grounding of humility and gratitude will always fall short of a meaningful and effective solution to the problems at hand.[21] Secular modernity is thus by definition antitranscendentalist, especially in the Tahan meaning of Intranscendentalism. Extranscendentalism remains the rule of the day, with modernity's stubborn refusal to acknowledge its own complicity in a destructive form of "transcendentalism." On the other hand, Taha is as stubborn in his insistence that "current" modernity's bankruptcy is caused precisely by the severance of the paradigmatic link between the human and the higher powers that gave this human his raison d'être, powers that have been in existence long before him and that will

continue after he is gone. Humility and gratitude cannot have a genuine, transformative power in modulating the new subject without this recognition. The issue then is never just a matter of faith, religion, or secularism, but rather nothing short of a constitutive epistemology. This is what makes us one kind of human rather than another.

Taha Responding

The following is Taha's response to the penultimate draft of this work. In the final version, I have summarized his response in chapter 2, section 4, and offered my own critique. Passages in the text have been numbered for ease of reference, and page citations to the manuscript he read have been adjusted to reflect the published format.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

فضيلة العلامة الدكتور وائل حلاق

تحية طيبة مباركة، وبعد،

[1¶] لَكَم تشوَّقتُ إلى لقائكم يوم أن حللْتُ بدياركم الأمريكية، مجريا بعض الفحوص الطبية، لا سيما وأن الأخ الفاضل الدكتور عابد عواد أبلغني أن شوقكم إلـى لقائي لا يقل عن شوقي إليكم، كأننا تعارفنا وتآلفنا في عالم لطيف غير كثيف لا تُدركه أبصارنا!

والآن وقد تجلىَّ عمقُ هذه الصلة في كتابكم الذي بين يديَّ: *Reforming Modernity*، والذي هو ثمرة صحبة طويلة لفكري، فلا يسعني إلا أن أشكر لكم بالغ الشكر طول صبركم على هذه الصحبة، حتى أخرجتم إلى الناس عملا إبداعيا متميزا ولبنة أساسية في صرح المشترَك الفكري الإنساني، واصِلين أسباب الفكر العربي والإسلامي المعاصر بأسباب الفكر الأوروبي والأمريكي؛ ولقد استمتعتُ بالنظر فيه، قارئا له قراءة من لا يغتَرُّ بما وافقتموه فيه، معتبرا أن الخطأ أصل والصوابَ فرع، ولا يَضِيره ما خالفتموه فيه، معتبرا أن الاختلاف أصل والاتفاق فرع.

فلما طلبت في كتابكم **أصلَ** وجوه الاتفاق بيني وبينكم، مستغنيا به عما تفرَّع عليه، ووجدت أنه "**إرادة بناء مفهوم للإنسان جديد**"، لم يزدني ذلك إلا تصميما على دفع الشُّبَه التي يُـمكن أن تَرِد عليَّ فيما يأتي من أعمالي، مستقبَلاً، إن أُنسِئ في عمري؛ كما أني لما طلبت فيه أصل وجوه الاختلاف بيني وبينكم، حتى لا تتشعب بي سبل الردِّ، ووجدت أنه "**الفصل بين واقع الحداثة وروحها**"، لم يَزِدني ذلك إلا حرصا على دفع أسباب الاختلاف التي قد تُغري بالانتصار للذات حيث ينبغي الانتصار للآخر، وإلا فلا أقل من حَمْل كلامه على أفضل وجوهه.

[٢¶] ولا يخفى عليكم أني أسَّسْتُ دعوى "الفصل بين واقع الحداثة وتطبيقاتها" على مبادئ مخصوصة تجمع بين مقتضيات النظر ومقتضيات العمل، جاعلا من واجبي نحو القارئ جلْبه إلى العمل بما أوصِّل إليه؛ والمبادئ التي تأسَّسَ عليها هذا الفصل ثلاثة:

أحدها، "**مبدأ التقريب التداولي**"؛ يقضي هذا المبدأ بالتصرف في المنقول بما يوافق مقتضيات المجال التداولي للمتلقي، عقيدة ولغة ومعرفة، حتى ولو دعا ذلك إلى إدخال تغيير في مضمون المنقول، لأن الفائدة ليست في أن يعلم المتلقي ما نُقل إليه، بل في أن يعمل بما علم، وكلما زاد وصلُه بهذه المقتضيات التداولية، زادت أسباب دخوله في العمل بالمعلوم، خاصة بالنسبة للمتلقي العربي أو الإسلامي الذي هو أحوج من سواه إلى أن يتدارك ما فاته؛ لذلك، لم أتردَّد في أن أتصرَّف في بعض المفاهيم التي نقلتها إليه؛ وأضرب مثالا على ذلك بمفهوم "الرشد"؛ ولو أن لفظه مستعار من "كانط"، فقد فرَّقت بين مفهوم "الرشد" ومفهوم "النقد" حيث جمع بينهما "كانط" ومن تَبعه؛ فليس كل راشد ناقد، ولا كلُّ ناقد راشد في مجالنا التداولي؛ وقد جاء الكلام في هذا التقريب مبسوطا في فصل "الترجمة التأصيلية" من كتاب **فقه الترجمة**.

[٣¶] والثاني، "**مبدأ المناسبة الظرفية**"؛ يقضي هذا المبدأ بمراعاة مختلف الظروف التي تحيط بالمتلقي، بحيث يُختار من طرق التوصيل ما يجعله يُطيق تقبُّل ما ألقي به إليه؛ والظروف التي دعتني إلى وضع نظرية "روح الحداثة" هي حالةُ "سكرة" بالحداثة كانت فيها مختلف الهيئات والدوائر في البلاد تلهج بإقامة الحداثة في جميع مرافق الحياة، كأنها الشريعة الجديدة التي لا يزيغ عنها إلا هالك؛ فتعيَّن عليَّ إخراج القراء من هذه السكرة الحداثية التي استبدت بهم أيما استبداد؛ ولم يكن من سبيل إلى ذلك إلا بأن أستعمل اللغة الحداثية المألوفة لهم، وأباشر تَنسيب هذا المفهوم، بحيث يُقدِرهم على التحرر من استبداده؛ فلو ألقِي إليهم بخطاب آخر، لقابَلوه بالرفض المطلق ومزيد الاستغراق في سكرتهم؛ وواضح أن واحدا من وجوه هذا التنسيب يقضي بتمييز مستويين اثنين في الحداثة يُؤخذ بأحدهما ويُترك الآخر؛ ولا يقال بأني قدَّمت متطلبات المتلقي على متطلبات الحقيقة، لأن قصدي لم يكن إدانة كل شيء في الحداثة، وإنما جعلُ القراء يـميزون الصالح من الطالح في مكتسباتها.

[٤¶] والثالث، "**مبدأ توسيع نطاق التواصل الفكري**"؛ يقضي هذا المبدأ بإيجاد الأسباب الفكرية التي توصِّل المثقف العربي أو المسلم إلى أن يَـمُدَّ غيره من مثقفي العالم بقدر ما يستمد منهم، مبدعا كما يبدعون؛ ويبدو أن أفضل طريق يمكن لهذا المثقف اتباعُه للوصول إلى عقولهم هو استعمال مفاهيمهم نفسها، مع فتح آفاق فيها لم تخطر على بالهم، يتخذها مداخل لمعان أخلاقية يستمدها من تراثه؛ ولا شك أن اقتباسي لمفهوم "الحداثة"، مع تفريقي بين جانب الروح فيه وجانب التطبيق، لافتا انتباه المتلقي غير العربي أو غير المسلم إلى إمكان فتح باب الحوار فيه، إن لم يُغنِ هذا المفهوم، فإنه لا يُفقره أبدا، حتى ولو ردَّه هذا المتلقي، لأنه قد تصوَّر مقصوده وأفقَّه غير المادي، وفي هذا التصور خطوة نحن الغرض المطلوب؛ وهكذا، لم أجد حرَجا - وأنا أقصد إعادة التفكير الفلسفي في هذا المفهوم - في أن أستنبط من "واقع" الحداثة نفسه، وهو تطبيق غربي أصيل لا غبار عليه، المفاهيمَ الستة التي تتحدّث بها روحها، أي "الاستقلال" و"الإبداع" و"التعقيل" و"التفصيل" و"التوسع" و"التعميم"، متخذا إياها أدوات تمكنني بأن أدخُل في حوار فلسفي موسَّع مع الآخر، فضلا عن الاشتغال على الحداثة بما يخرجها من فقرها الأخلاقي، سعيا إلى أن أبثَّ فيها قدرا من القيم والحدود.

[٥¶] بناء على هذه المسلَّمات الثلاث التي تجمع بين "التداول الخاص" و"التنسيب الظرفي" و"التفاعل مع الآخر"، يتبين أن الفصل بين واقع الحداثة وروحها لا يمكن أن يكون فصلا مطلقا، وإنما هو فصل **نسبي**، وبيان ذلك من الوجوه الآتية:

أحدها، أن المراد بـ"روح الحداثة" هو "المعاني الموجِّهة للحداثة"، والمرادَ بـ"واقع الحداثة" هو "المباني المجسِّدة للحداثة"، بحيث تكون علاقة روحها بواقعها أشبه بعلاقة المعنى بالمبنى أو علاقة القيمة بالصورة؛ فكما أنه لا مبنى بغير معنى، أو لا صورة بغير قيمة، فكذلك **لا واقع للحداثة بغير روح**؛ وفي المقابل، فكما أنه يجوز أن يوجد المعنى بغير مبنى، وإلا فلا أقل من أن يُتصوَّر بدونه، ويجوز أن توجد القيمة بغير صورة، وإلا فلا أقل من أن تُتصوَّر بدونها، فكذلك **يجوز أن توجد روح الحداثة بغير واقعها، وإلا فلا أقل من أن تُتصوَّر بدونه**؛ ومتى اتضح أن الروح منفصلة عن الواقع من وجه ومتصلة به من وجه آخر، لزم أن يكون الانفصال بينهما افتراقا نسبيا.

[¶6] **والوجه الثاني،** أن "الروح" غير "الماهية"؛ فقد مضى أن "روح الشيء" هي "المعاني الموجِّهة له"؛ ومعلوم أن "ماهية الشيء" هي "الخصائص المحدّدة له"؛ وشتان بين "المعاني الموجِّهة" و"الخصائص المحددة"، إذ الأولى تنتُج عن **تقويم** (أو **تقييم**) الشيء، بينما الثانية تنتُج عن **تحديد** الشيء (أو **توصيفه**)؛ وقد حرصتُ، في مطلع كتاب **روح الحداثة**، على أن أتجاوز "طريقة التعريف" التي اتُّبعت في بيان طبيعة الحداثة والتي أدت إلى تعدُّد تعاريفها، بل تضاربها، وأن أستبدل بها "طريقة التقويم" التي لا تهتم بطبيعة الحداثة بقدر ما تهتم بـ"وجهتها"؛ وواضح أن "الوجهة" غير "الطبيعة"، إذ الأولى عبارة عن **الاتجاه** الذي يتخذه الشيء، بينما الثانية عبارة عن **البنية** التي تقوم به.

والظاهر أن الاعتراض على الفصل بين روح الحداثة وواقعها **خطأ محلُّه**، إذ تعلَّق، أصلا، بـ**بنية** الحداثة التي لم أشتغل عليها، ولم يتعلق **بوجهتها** التي أفردتُ لها الكتاب المذكور؛ والشاهد على ذلك أنه أُخِذ عليَّ كوني نسبتُ صيغ العولمة إلى روح الحداثة ولَمّا تبرز هذه الصيغ إلى الوجود، ثم سِيق الكلام عن العولمة بلغة البنية، لا بلغة الوجهة (ص 118)؛ والصواب أن "التعميم" معنى متعلق بالوجهة، لا بالبنية، وهو الذي يعني روح الحداثة؛ أما "العولمة" التي هي أمر بنيوي، فإنما هي عبارة عن التطبيق الغربي الحالي الذي ضربتُه مثالا على "التعميم" الذي هو المعنى الروحي المطلوب لي كما فعلت بالنسبة للمعاني الحداثية الأخرى؛ كما أُخِذ علي أني أنسب العولمة إلى الإسلام، مع ما يترتب عليها من محو للفروق الثقافية والتاريخية بين الشعوب؛ والصواب أن الذي أنسبه إلى الإسلام ليس "البنية العولمية"، وإنما "الوجهة التعميمية" التي قد تُسفر عن تطبيق مغاير كليا للتطبيق الغربي للتعميم؛ ولعله يكون تطبيقا أخلاقيا شاملا لا يمحو إلا ما ثبت إضراره بالإنسان، سواء كان شأنا حداثيا غربيا أو إرثا ثقافيا شعبيا.

[¶7] **والوجه الثالث،** أن أسباب التواصل مع الآخرين تكون أقوى في قربها من الفطرة منها في بُعدها عنها؛ والفطرة، كما وضّحته في غير ما كتاب، عبارة عن مستودع القيم الذي ينزل من الإنسان منزلة "الذاكرة الأصلية السابقة على الزمان"؛ لذلك، فمن الممكن أن نصل رُكنَي الرشد الحداثي، أي "الاستقلال" و"الإبداع" بـ"الحرية الفطرية"، وهي عبارة عن **حرية خلاقة**؛ وأن نصل، أيضا، رُكنَي النقد الحداثي، أي "التعقيل" و"التفصيل" بـ"التمييز الفطري" وهو عبارة عن **إدراك عملي**؛ كما يمكن أن نصل رُكنَي الشمول الحداثي، أي "التوسع" و"التعميم" بـ"التعارف الفطري" الذي هو عبارة عن **اشتراك في المعروف**؛ وهذه المعاني الفطرية تفتح، في المعاني الحداثية، فضاءات اتصال أو انفصال مع التطبيق الحداثي، فإن اتصلت بها، أدرك هذا التطبيق قدرا من الأخلاق، وإن انفصلت عنها، قلَّ هذا القدر إلى حد خُلوِّه عنه.

وبناء على ما ذُكر من الأوجه الثلاثة للتفريق بين طرفي الحداثة: "الواقع" و"الروح"، يتبين أن هذا التفريق لا غلو فيه ولا تكلُّف (ص 332)، إذ هو أقرب إلى "الفرق" منه إلى مطلق الفصل، إذ الفرق عبارة عن تفاوت لا يُشعر بالتباين، في حين أن الفصل قد يشعر بوجوده.

وقد لا يكفي دفع الاعتراض على دعوى انفصال روح الحداثة عن واقعها، كي يُسلَّم للمدعي صِدْق دعواه؛ فيتعين الانتقال إلى خطوة أخرى، وهي إيراد الاعتراضات على الدعوى التي تضادُّها، أي القول بـ"الارتباط العضوي" أو "الالتحام" بين روح الحداثة وواقعها (ص. 115)؛ وهذه الاعتراضات هي كالتالي:

[8¶] **الاعتراض الأول**، يبدو أن القول بهذا "الالتحام" يضعنا أمام إشكالات ثلاثة؛ **أحدها**، أن الحداثة تغدو ظاهرة حضارية واحدة لا ثاني لها؛ والحال أن أهلها يقرون بثبوت الاختلاف بين أشكالها في مختلف مجتمعاتهم، ناهيك عن الاختلاف فيما بينهم في بيان محدِّداتها؛ **والثاني**، أن الحداثة تغدو حدثا حضاريا أوّل لا سابق له، وآخِر لا لاحق له؛ إذ إن مِثلَ هذا الالتحام يَقصرُ وجوده على نفسه، شكلا ومضمونا، فلا يتعدى إلى غيره، لا بكثير، ولا بقليل، وهذا يبعد في العقل تصوُّره؛ فيقينا أن الحداثة لها أسباب في الماضي، قد ذهبت صورها، ولكن بقيت نتائجها، فإنها لم تحدُث لأول وهلة من لا شيء؛ كما أن لها آثارا في المستقبل، مستبدلةً بصورها صورا غيرها، فلا تصير دفعة واحدة إلى لا شيء؛ **والثالث**، أن الحداثة تصير واقعا لا روح له؛ إذ يرجع القول بالالتحام بين الطرفين: الواقع والروح، في نهاية المطاف، إلى القول بارتباط الواقع بنفسه أو ارتباط بعضه ببعض ليس إلا؛ وليس من شك أن هذا التصور يحجب عن الواقع الحداثي كل إمكان لمجاوزة نفسه، لا بطريق الإحالة على معناه في سياق تحقُّقه، ولا بطريق حفظ معناه بعد ذهاب صورته.

[9¶] **والاعتراض الثاني**، الراجح أن التحام واقع الحداثة بروحها ليس، كما يُظنّ، خصوصية متعلقة بالحداثة نفسها، منظورا إليها ككل مُصمَت، وإنما هو **خصوصية متعلقة بالجانب التطبيقي من الحداثة** فقط؛ فما اعتُبر خاصية منسوبة إلى روحها ما هو، في الحقيقة، إلا خاصية منسوبة إلى تطبيقها؛ وبيان ذلك أنه لما كان بالإمكان وصل معاني روح الحداثة بمعاني الفطرة، حريةً وتمييزا وتعارفا، فقد وجب، عند التطبيق، استحضار هذه المعاني الفطرية وتقويم العناصر التطبيقية في ضوئها؛ فإن أمكن ردُّ هذه العناصر إلى المعاني الفطرية، فإن المعاني الحداثية التي هي من وراء العناصر التطبيقية تكون توسيعا للمعاني الفطرية؛ وإذا لم يُمكن ردُّ هذه العناصر التطبيقية إلى المعاني الفطرية، فإنها تُعتبر مجرد مظاهر تطبيقية لا شأن لروح الحداثة به؛ وهذا بالذات ما لا يتأتَّى في سياق "نظرية الالتحام" التي تسوِّي بين الروح والتطبيق، فتنسُب إلى الروح ما حقُّه أن ينسب إلى التطبيق.

[10¶] **والاعتراض الثالث**، أن القول بالالتحام بين روح الحداثة وواقعها يفضي إلى الوقوع فيما نسميه بـآفة "**السياقية الجذرية**"؛ فمعلوم أن "السياقية" تقوم في ادعاء أن المعاني تختلف قيمتها من سياق إلى آخر؛ والمقصود بـ"السياقية الجذرية" هو السياقية التي تدَّعي أنه لا وجود لأي قدْر قيمي مشترك بين السياقات التي تَرِد فيها هذه المعاني؛ وعلى هذا، فمتى سلَّمنا بهذا الالتحام الحداثي، لزم أن تكون الحداثة في سياق معيّن غيرَها في سياق آخر بصورة لا يمكن معها المقارنة بين السياقين، ناهيك عن المفاضلة بينهما؛ والسياقية الحداثية التي تكون بهذا الوصف تُخرِج صاحبها إلى "النسبية المطلقة" التي ينتفي معها وجود أي معنى حداثي كلي، ويرد كل معنى من معاني الحداثة إلى أسباب تطبيقِه.

ومِما مضى من الاعتراضات الثلاثة على القول بالالتحام بين طرفي الحداثة: الواقع والروح، يتضح أن القول بالانفصال قد يدخل على هذا القول بما لا يدخل به على ضده، أي القول بالالتحام بينهما؛ إذ يُفضي إلى النسبية المطلقة، بينما الانفصال لا يفضي إلى ضدها، أي "الإطلاقية المرسَلة" التي توجب التباين الكلي، لأن الواقع لا يوجد إلا مع تحقُّق الروح.

[11¶] ولعلي إن أغالي إن ذهبت، بناء على ما تقدَّم، إلى أن النظرية الأخلاقية التي تقول بالانفصال بين واقع الحداثة وروحها تقوم بها إمكانات فكرية وعملية **أوسع** من النظرية الأخلاقية التي تقول بالالتحام بين هذين الطرفين، إذ أنها لا تيأس من إمكان تقويم اعوجاج الحداثة، حتى ولو فرضنا أن تطبيقاتها الغربية لا أخلاقية بصفة نهائية، إذ يبقى دائما في الإمكان إيجاد تطبيقات لها أخرى ترعى هذا الجانب أو ذاك من الأخلاق، وإلا فلا أقل من أنها لا تستغرق في اللاأخلاقية كما استغرقت فيها هذه التطبيقات الغربية، "تقدما" و"عولمة" و"شركات" (أذكر هنا مفاهيمكم).

وليس هذا فحسب، بل إن نظرية الانفصال **تتسع لنظرية الالتحام**، إذ تنزل نظرية الالتحام منها منزلة ما أسميه بـ"نظرية الانفصال الحدية الدنيا"؛ فهذه النظرية تقول بوجود تطبيق واحد للحداثة في مقابل "نظرية الانفصال الحدية القصوى" التي تقول بوجود عدد لامتناه من تطبيقاتها؛ هكذا، يكفي أن نقرِّر أنه لا وجود إلا لتطبيق واحد ووحيد للحداثة، لكي يصبح بالإمكان تفريع نظرية الالتحام من نظرية الانفصال؛ إذ عندئذ، يصير مقتضى الواقع الحداثي مطابقا لمقتضى الروح الحداثية، كأنما واقع الحداثة هو عين روحها؛ في حين أنه لا يمكن الإتيان بعكس هذا التفريع، أي تفريع نظرية الانفصال على نظرية الالتحام؛ فيلزم أن نظرية الانفصال الحداثي أخص وأقوى من نظرية الالتحام الحداثي.

[12¶] هذا ما حضرني وأنا أتأمل اعتراضكم الأساسي علي، لا طلبا للإلزام الجدلي، ولا حرصا على إقناعكم بدعواي، وإنما طلبا لمتعة التواصل معكم ومقابلة الاعتراف بمثله؛ فما بذلتموه من جهد في تتبُّع دقائق مسطوري، وما وُفِّقتم فيه من نقله إلا اللغة الإنجليزية، وما برَعتم فيه من مقابلات إنجليزية لمصطلحات عربية أصيلة، وما وقَفْتم عنده طويلا من مفاهيم فلسفية جديدة، كل ذلك يجعلني لا أرى في مختلف اعتراضاتكم إلا اقتناعا منكم بفائدة هذا العمل الفكري في التصدي للطوفان الحداثي، مجددا لكم بالغ عرفاني بما أوجدتم من أسباب التعاون بيننا على دفع هذا الطوفان وإعادة **تثوير الإنسان.**

[13¶] يبقى أن أنبِّه على أمر لم يَسبق أن نبهت قرائي عليه، وهو أني أكتب اسمي الكامل مقدِّما، في الترتيب، اسم "طه" على اسم "عبد الرحمن"، على خلاف الوجه الذي ينبغي، إذ أن اسمي الشخصي (First Name) هو "عبد الرحمن"، واسمي العائلي (Family Name) هو "طه"، وسبب ذلك يرجع إلى الاستعمال الذي ترسَّخ في وسطي المغربي؛ فقد ترون صواب إعادة كتابة اسمي على الصورة التالية: Abdurrahman TAHA في العنوان، ثم تستبدلون في المتن اسم Taha مكان Abdurrahman في كل المواطن؛ ولعلكم تؤثرون الاحتفاظ باسم Abdurrahman في هذه المواطن، فلا بأس من ذلك، لأني أحب هذا الاسم ولو أنه قليلا ما أُنادَى به، إذ يُشعرني بأن الرحمة قريبة غير بعيدة.

الرباط، 25 مايو 2018

عبد الرحمن طه

Notes

Introduction

1. Obviously, this intellectual path must have originated in Taha's mind much earlier. In *Tajdīd al-Manhaj*, for instance, he places the beginnings of his concept of *tadāwul* in the 1960s. Taha, *Tajdīd al-Manhaj fī Taqwīm al-Turāth* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2007), 244. In a recent lecture, titled "al-Usus al-Iʾtimāniyya lil-Murābaṭa al-Maqdisiyya," delivered on January 27, 2018, he identifies 1967 as the starting point of his intellectual "awakening," after the Arab military defeat of that year. See www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Jvv9u6EbY0& app=desktop.

2. Freud and Lacan, for instance, are his main interlocutors in the extensive *Shurūd Mā Baʿda al-Dahrāniyya: al-Naqd al-Iʾtimānī lil-Khurūj min al-Akhlāq* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Fikr wal-Ibdāʿ, 2016). For the range of such engagements, see also Taha, *Language Matters: A Dialogue on Language and Logic*, Tabah Essay Series (Abu Dhabi: Tabah Foundation, 2010).

3. Most of these philosophers will make an appearance in my presentation of Taha. An idea of the extent of his engagement with several philosophers can be efficiently gleaned from his concise *Taʿaddudiyat al-Qiyam: Mā Madāhā? Wa-mā Ḥudūduhā?* (Marrakech: al-Maṭbaʿa wal-Wirāqa al-Waṭaniyya, 2001), in which he defends a particular conception of "value-pluralism," and effectively engages with Max Weber, Isaiah Berlin, Jürgen Habermas, Karl-Otto Apel, John Rawls and Michael Waltzer.

4. See Wael Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), xxxix–l.

5. In Taha's usage, *waṣl* is not just "connection" and "joining," but also "continuity." *Faṣl* on the other hand, is an antonym of *waṣl*, meaning "severance" but also "discontinuousness" and "rupture."

6. M. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al., vol. 3 (New York: New Press, 1994), 326–48; Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 254, 344n54.

7. On this form of sovereignty, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, esp. chaps. 2 and 4.

8. Hallaq, 100–101, 105, and passim.

9. I have in mind such "developments" as described by Gábor Ágoston, "Firearms and Military Adaptation: The Ottomans and the European Military Revolution," *Journal of World History* 25, no. 1 (2014), 85–124; Jonathan Grant, "Rethinking the Ottoman 'Decline,'" *Journal of World History* 10, no. 1 (1999): 179–201. On colonialism, Orientalism, and their associated sovereign forms of knowledge as distinctively modern phenomena, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 1–137, 179–228. On the military revolution, see Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

10. Lapidus, "Islamic Revival and Modernity: The Contemporary Movements and the Historical Paradigms," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40, no. 4 (1997): 444–60, at 446.

11. See Charles Issawi, "De-Industrialization and Re-Industrialization in the Middle East Since 1800," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12, no. 4 (December 1980): 469–79; Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms, 1812–1914," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1914*, ed. Halil Inalcık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 759–943, at 890–91; Wael Hallaq, *Sharīʿa: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 396–400.

12. See works cited in previous note.

13. For an overview of these reforms, see Hallaq, *Sharīʿa*, 396–429.

14. Amy Singer, *Charity in Islamic Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 92–113.

15. Murat Çizakça, *History of Philanthropic Foundations: The Islamic World from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi University Press, 2000); Henry Cattan, "The Law of Waqf," in *Law in the Middle East*, ed. Majid Khadduri and Herbert J. Liebesny (Washington, DC: Middle East Institute, 1955), 203–22; Richard van Leeuwen, *Waqfs and Urban Structures: The Case of Ottoman Damascus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); George Makdisi, *The Rise of the Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981); Hallaq, *Sharīʿa*, 53–54, 126, 141–46, 150, 191, 194, 195, and passim.

16. Hallaq, *Sharīʿa*, 433.

17. For a detailed analysis, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 118–25.

18. For a detailed account of these themes, see Hallaq, *Sharīʿa*, 357–550.

19. This, in part, is the subject of Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, esp. chaps. 2 and 4.

20. See Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 179–228. The idea here is that just as conventional genocides are by definition directed at certain ethnic and racial groups, structural genocides are directed at certain systems of knowledge and certain cultural institutions that can be wiped out of existence just as racial groups can

be "mowed" as "weeds in a garden." On this latter theme, see Zygmund Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); A. Dirk Moses, "Hannah Arendt, Imperialisms, and the Holocaust," in *German Orientalism: Race, the Holocaust, and Postwar Germany*, ed. Volker Langbehn and Mohammad Salama (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 72–92; Moses, "Colonialism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, ed. Peter Hayes and John K. Roth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 68–80.

21. This theme being the main subject of my *Restating Orientalism*. Unfortunately, the intellectual innocence and stunning naïveté of the old guard (the likes of Bernard Lewis) seem to continue to the present, entirely insulated from postcolonial critique and a vast body of scholarship in the social sciences and humanities. A stark instance of delusional denial of Orientalist coloniality may be found in as recent a publication as that of Alexander Knysh, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 3–5.

22. In my repertoire of meaning, psychoepistemology refers to expansive forms of knowledge, including those psychological forms that are excluded by Enlightenment conceptions of reason but that Islamic culture deemed integral to human understanding of reality, however this may be defined. Such forms were articulated within a variety of intellectual fields, ranging from falsafa (e.g., Avicennan-Aristotelian psychology) to Ṣūfism and Adab. As we will see later, Taha elaborates a robust conception of reason that he calls ʿaql muʾayyad (enhanced reason), a conception that integrates a distinctly mystical "epistemology." See chapter 4.

23. Faraḥ Anṭūn, *Ibn Rushd wa-Falsafatuh*, ed. and intro. Ṭayyib Tīzīnī (Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī, 2007).

24. Stephan Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 150.

25. For an evaluation of Badawī's work, see ʿAbd al-Ilāh Bilqazīz, *Naqd al-Turāth* (Casablanca: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2014), 97–134, especially 102. See also Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm ʿAṭiyya, *al-Akhlāq fil-Fikr al-ʿArabī al-Muʿāṣir* (Cairo: Dār Qabāʾ lil-Ṭibāʿa wal-Nashr wal-Tawzīʿ, 1998), 99–105.

26. For a representative denial of rupture in line with modernization theory as articulated by Orientalism, see ʿAbd al-Hādī ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Sulṭat al-Naṣṣ: Qirāʾāt fī Tawẓīf al-Naṣṣ al-Dīnī* (Beirut: Sīnā lil-Nashr, 1998), 277–78. On the *nahḍa* as "the mark of a violent epistemological wrenching," see Stephan Sheehi, "Towards a Critical Theory of al-Nahḍah: Epistemology, Ideology and Capital," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 43 (2012): 269–98.

27. I say "by definition" because *turāth* is incomprehensible without the notion of legacy (*irth*, *mīrāth*) from a past that is at least mostly dead. Technically, to be a beneficiary of an *irth/mīrāth* is to assume a legator, a *muwarrith*, one who must be dead in order to be such a legator. *Turāth*, therefore, is not, and cannot be, a living tradition, but only an inheritance from what was once a living tradition.

28. Bilqazīz, *Naqd al-Turāth*, 22–23.

29. See Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 14–17; and Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 34, 125–26, 150–55, 209, 214–15, and passim. The designation of progress

as theological, in the manner that we have come to recognize, say, political theology, has been a deliberate shift in the latter, having myself been dissatisfied with such descriptors as the "theory" or "doctrine" of progress, descriptors I have employed in the former monograph.

30. F. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870s*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), 80–86, at 81, 83; see also Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 323.

31. J. B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry Into Its Origin and Growth* (London: Macmillan, 1920), xi; Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968), 253–64.

32. Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic, 1980), 4, 7.

33. Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 20, 25.

34. The ideological, "legislative" force of language is evident in the lexical evolution of the term. Regress, much like reversion, does not make an appearance in several old English dictionaries (e.g., A. L. Mayhew and Walter W. Skeat, *The Concise Dictionary of Middle English: From A.D. 1150 To 1580* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1888]). Even as late as the eighteenth century, the term meant "to go back; to return" (e.g., Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language* [London: n.p., 1792]). In the twentieth century, the term acquires additional meanings, reflecting the influence of the theology of progress. In *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. C. Merriam, 1976), the term now means "retrograde," "retrogression," "retrogradation." Online dictionaries define the nominal form as the "action of returning to a former or less developed state."

35. On the evolution of nostalgia as a clinical condition in modernity, see the valuable article by Nauman Naqvi, "The Nostalgic Subject: A Genealogy of the 'Critique of Nostalgia,'" Centro Interuniversitario per le ricerche sulla Sociologia del Diritto e delle Instituzioni Giuridiche, Working Paper n. 23 (September 2007): 4–51.

36. Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 14.

37. Naqvi, "Nostalgic Subject."

38. When used for such purposes, ethical time served as moral admonishment to the ruler as an individual believer, however weighty his duties and responsibilities were. As a typical example, see Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1988), esp. 5–42. See also Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Māwardī, *Tashīl al-Naẓar wa-Taʿjīl al-Ẓafar: Fī Akhlāq al-Malik wa-Siyāsat al-Mulk* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-ʿArabiyya, 1981), esp. 3–81.

39. For the writings of commentators on the Islamic tradition mentioned in this paragraph, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 3–5.

40. See also Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 79–84, 115–24.

41. Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 110–12.

42. Hallaq, *Sharīʿa*, 1–12.

43. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunnī* Uṣūl al-Fiqh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 36–74.

44. On central and peripheral domains, see Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 6–12.

45. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī, *Lawāqiḥ al-Anwār al-Qudsiyya fī Bayān al-ʿUhūd al-Muḥammadiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005), 13–16.

46. See, for instance, ʿAqqād's renowned ʿAbqariyyāt series in *al-Majmūʿa al-Kāmila li- Muʾallafāt al-Ustādh ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād: al-ʿAbqariyyāt al-Islāmiyya*, vols. 1–4 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1984–86); Ṭāha Ḥusayn, *ʿAlā Hāmish al-Sīra* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1966); Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, *Ḥayāt Muḥammad*, 14th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 2001); Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm, *Muḥammad Ṣalla Allāhu ʿAlayhi wa-Sallam* (Cairo: Dār Miṣr lil-Ṭibāʿa, n.d.).

47. Bandalī Jawzī, *Min Tārīkh al-Ḥarakāt al-Fikriyya fil-Islām* (Jerusalem: Manshūrāt Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, 1977); Bilqazīz, *Naqd al-Turāth*, 137–58; Ḥusayn Murruwwa, *al-Nazaʿāt al-Māddiyya fil-Falsafa al-ʿArabiyya-al-Islāmiyya*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī, 2002).

48. Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, chap. 2.

49. Hallaq, *Sharīʿa*, 125–58.

50. For a detailed discussion of Islamic nonpolitical governmentality, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 73–84; Hallaq, "Qurʾānic Constitutionalism and Moral Governmentality: Further Notes on the Founding Principles of Islamic Society and Polity," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 8, nos. 1–2 (2012): 1–51.

51. It is one of the persistent arguments of my *Impossible State* that while the world of Islam suffered systematic institutional devastation during the nineteenth century and thereafter, the memory and practice of much of those *sharʿī-ṣūfī* technologies of the self have persisted into the present.

52. See the perceptive critique of Ali Oumlil, *L'histoire et son discourse: essai sur la méthodologie d'Ibn Khaldoun* (Rabat: Éditions techniques nord-africaines, 1979). The value of his critique remains nonetheless burdened by the claim that historical knowledge must indeed be sought but that it ought to remain ideologically neutral, which is to say that the acquisition of knowledge must stop with understanding as a neutral act! See also the useful article by Abdelmajid Hannoum, "Translation and the Colonial Imaginary: Ibn Khaldun Orientalist," *History and Theory* 42 (February 2003): 61–81.

53. Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories*, 214–20.

54. Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 23–25.

55. Sheehi, 25. (I have added diacritics to Sheehi's text for the sake of my own consistency in this book.) It is to be noted that for Bustānī, the Arabs began to lag behind in the fourteenth century, when they "came to think that the acquisition of knowledge and science . . . were a corrupt affair and a vain endeavor" (23).

56. An index in favor of averting this doubt is the intense preoccupation of Jābrī with the Qurʾān, especially during the last phase of his life. See Jābrī, *Madkhal ilā al-Qurʾān al-Karīm: Fil-Taʿrīf bil-Qurʾān* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2010); Jābrī, *Fahm al-Qurʾān al-Ḥakīm: al-Tafsīr al-Wāḍiḥ Ḥasab Tartīb al-Nuzūl*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Wāḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2010).

57. See, in particular, Misīrī, *al-Falsafa al-Māddiyya wa-Tafkīk al-Insān* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2002) and Misīrī with Fatḥī al-Turaykī, *al-Ḥadātha wa-mā baʿda al-Ḥadātha* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2003), 11–177; Naṣṣār, *Ṭarīq al-Istiqlāl al-Falsafī: Sabīl al-Fikr al-ʿArabī ilā al-Ḥurriyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalīʿa, 1975); Ghaydān al-Sayyid ʿAlī, "al-Istiqlāl al-Falsafī wa-Muqāwamat al-Taghrīb ʿInda Nāṣif Naṣṣār," *Muʾminūn Bilā Ḥudūd* ([Rabat] March 18, 2016): 1–19; but also see Naṣṣār's critique of Taha's *al-Ḥaqq al-ʿArabī f al-Ikhtilāf al-Falsafī* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2006), in "Al-Tawāṣul al-Falsafī wal-Majāl al-Tadāwulī," *al-Mustaqbal al-ʿArabī* 347 (December-January 2008): 8–35.

58. For Jābrī, "Arab mind" is not an "ideological slogan" but effectively "the sum total of concepts and intellectual activities that govern, in one decisive degree or another, the Arab human's outlook and the manner in which he deals with them in the sphere of acquisition, production, and reproduction of knowledge." This "mind" is also said to have "taken root" since "ʿaṣr al-tadwīn," presumably during the eighth century. Jābrī, *Takwīn al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1987), 70, 71. There are at least two obvious problems with this conception. First, it is not clear why only the "Arab" suffers from this "crisis" (as he often calls it, and not the "Iranian" or "Turk"). Was there a concept of the Arab in the eighth century and down to the eighteenth? Second, and perhaps more important, for Jābrī to maintain such a conception, he must assume that there has existed an unchanging architecture and constitution of the "Arab" mind over a full millennium, a ludicrous notion that defies in its implausibility even the ideological "paradigm of decline."

59. The Arabic term *bayān* has no exact equivalent in European languages, being a rich matrix of discourse that evolved over several centuries in the intellectual landscapes of Islam. Basic to the meaning is the idea that *bayān* is that language through which things are made intelligible and clear, this including what we call today semiotics (in Arabic, *ʿilm al-dalāla*). The Qurʾān is said to be a book of *bayān* because it contains all knowledge, that is, it contains "explanations for all things." These explanations are always eloquent (*faṣīḥ*) and logical, all at once. When God is said to have "taught humans *bayān*," it is meant that he created a species that is distinguished (*infaṣalat*) from the "animal kingdom" by the fact that this species can articulate the world in language (*nuṭq*), and this latter always implying that rationality and logic are integral to language. Man as *ḥayawān nāṭiq* is not just "a speaking animal" but rather "a rational animal" (*nuṭq* [speech] and *manṭiq* [logic] deriving from the same etymological conception). Here, for lack of a better alternative, I resort to the expression "hermeneutics," the science of explicating and rendering intelligible all textual manifestations, linguistic structures, and what have been called "verbal and nonverbal indicants" (*dalāʾil lafẓiyya/dalāʾil iʿtibāriyya*). Jābrī uses *bayān* as a tag to capture the juristic projects within the Islamic tradition, projects that dominated *Sharīʿa* as a central domain. For the semantic range of *bayān*, see Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, ed. ʿĀmir Aḥmad Ḥaydar and ʿAbd al-Munʿim Ibrāhīm, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2009), 13:73–84; Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Fayrūzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1998), 1182–83; for technical

meanings of the term, see Muḥammad ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn*, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2006), 2:206–8.

60. On ʿirfān and Ṣūfism in general, the target of Jābrī, see the translation of various *ṣūfī* texts in John Renard, *Knowledge of God in Classical Sufism: Foundations of Islamic Mystical Theology* (New York: Paulist, 2004); Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Carl W. Earnst, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam* (Boston: Shambhala, 2011).

61. For a technical definition of the term in the Islamic sciences, see Tahānawī, *Kashshāf*, 1:203–5.

62. Jābrī, *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī: Dirāsa Taḥlīliyya Naqdiyya li-Nuẓum al-Maʿrifa fil-Thaqāfa al-ʿArabiyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1986), 485; Jābrī, *al-Turāth wal-Ḥadātha* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1991), 272–73.

63. Jābrī, *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, 378–79, for ʿirfān as magic and legend. On p. 67, he says of *bayān*: "Wa-idhan, fal-taʾwīl al-bayānī . . . kāna tashrīʿan lil-ʿaql al-ʿArabī wa-lam yakun, ka-mā qad yuʿtaqad, majālan li-mumārasat al-faʿāliyya al-ʿaqliyya, faʿāliyyat al-ʿaql al-kawnī al-mustaqill bi-niẓāmihi ʿan niẓām al-lugha."

64. See previous note, and Jābrī, 38, 103–4.

65. See chapter 4, note 41, and Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 73–84.

66. Jābrī, *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, 374: "Fal-muṣtalaḥ al-ʿirfānī fil-Islām laysa Islāmiyy al-maḍmūn wa-lā ʿArabiyy al-aṣl." It is interesting to note that Jābrī does not level the same charge against the Aristotelian importations into Islam, which he obviously recognizes as "foreign." Why "foreignness" would work in favor of Aristotelianism but against gnosis is a matter that our author does not seem to address.

67. Jābrī, 253.

68. Jābrī, 255: "Yanṭaliq min al-qalaq wal-shuʿūr bil-khayba izāʾ al-wāqiʿ al-ladhī yajid nafsahu mulqā fī-hi . . . fa-lā yalqā illā mā yunaghghiṣ wa-yukaddir [al-ʿaysh]."

69. Jābrī, 255: the gnostic is said to be "muḥāṣar wa-mustaʿbad fa-yabdū al-ʿālam la-hu sharran kullahu, bal tuṣbiḥ mushkilatahu al-asāsiyya bal al-waḥīda hiya mushkilat al-sharr fil-ʿālam."

70. A recurrent emphasis throughout his work. See Jābrī, 371, 425, and passim.

71. Further on this concept, see epilogue, section 1.

72. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 166–217. See also John N. Gray, "On Negative and Positive Liberty," *Political Studies* 28, no. 4 (1980): 507–26; Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," in *The Idea of Freedom: Essays in Honor of Isaiah Berlin*, ed. Alan Ryan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 175–93.

73. On types of liberty, including the positive liberty of the ideological and individuated types, see epilogue, section 1.

74. Not to mention the five-volume series Naqd Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī that George Ṭarābīshī has dedicated to a penetrating critique of Jābrī. See, in particular, Ṭarābīshī, *Waḥdat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī al-Islāmī* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Sāqī, 2002);

Ṭarābīshī, *al-ʿAql al-Mustaqil fil-Islām?* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Sāqī, 2004); Ṭarābīshī, *Ishkāliyyāt al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Sāqī, 2010).

75. Ṭarābīshī, *Al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī al-ʿArabī: Dirāsa Taḥlīliyya Naqdiyya li-Nuẓum al-Qiyam fil-Thaqāfa al-ʿArabiyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2012) is technically the fourth installment (vol. 4) of the series titled Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī.

76. Ṭarābīshī, *Al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī al-ʿArabī*, 17, 56, and passim.

77. Ṭarābīshī, 60, 67. For a declared opposition to the diagnostic of crisis, see Taha, *Al-Ḥiwār Ufuqan lil-Fikr* (Beirut: al-Shabaka al-ʿArabiyya lil-Abḥāth wal-Nashr, 2013), 7–8.

78. Ṭarābīshī, *Al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī al-ʿArabī*: "Wal-azma hādhihi walladathā al-fitna al-kubrā . . . mimmā jaʿala azmat al-qiyam al-latī taʿkisuhā tabqā ḥayya ʿabr al-ʿuṣūr." See also George Ṭarābīshī's critique of Jābrī's attitude toward the "Arab" in comparison to the "Greek," in George Ṭarābīshī, *Naẓariyyat al-ʿAql* (Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī, 1996), 117–90.

79. Ṭarābīshī, *Al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī al-ʿArabī*, 68.

80. Ṭarābīshī, 70, 76, 78, 124, and passim; Ṭarābīshī, *al-Turāth wal-Ḥadātha*, 272–73.

81. Ṭarābīshī, *Al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī al-ʿArabī*, 78, 428, and generally 131–70.

82. Ṭarābīshī, 78.

83. Ṭarābīshī, 83, 345–64.

84. Ṭarābīshī, 103.

85. Ṭarābīshī, 109.

86. Ṭarābīshī, 427–28, 491–93.

87. Ṭarābīshī, 531–32, 536.

88. Ṭarābīshī, 572: "Kayfa Najʿal ʿIlma al-Akhlāq al-Mutadāwal wal-Munḥadir min al-Yūnān ʿIlman Islāmiyyan."

89. Ṭarābīshī, 546, 592.

90. Ṭarābīshī, 536.

91. Ṭarābīshī, 592.

92. See Hallaq, "Groundwork of the Moral Law: A New Look at the Qurʾān and the Genesis of Sharīʿa," *Islamic Law and Society* 16, nos. 3–4 (2009): 239–79; Hallaq, "Qurʾānic Constitutionalism and Moral Governmentality."

93. Ṭarābīshī, *Al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī al-ʿArabī*, 535.

94. Ṭarābīshī, 594.

95. For a discussion of the Is/Ought distinction, see chapter 5, section 2.

96. Ṭarābīshī, *Al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī al-ʿArabī*, 595: "Al-muhimmu annanī iktashaftu anna ʿāliman wāḥidan ʿalā al-aqall kāna qad sadda al-farāgha al-ladhī ishtakaytu minhu."

97. Ṭarābīshī, 595.

98. Ṭarābīshī, 607: "Wa-farādat sulṭān al-ʿulamāʾ al-ʿIzz ibn ʿAbd al-Salām wa-aṣālatuhu qāʾimatān wa-bi-wuḍūḥ fī annahu aḥdatha qaṭīʿa nihāʾiyya wa-jadhriyyā maʿ hādhihi al-bunya al-Yūnāniyya, wa-akhadha ka-badīl lahā bunya Islāmiyya."

99. Ṭarābīshī, 536.

100. Ṭarābīshī, 19, 594.

101. Sheehi, *Foundations of Modern Arab Identity*, 35. This essentially Hegelian analysis is also invoked by both Abdallah Laroui (al-ʿArwī), and, after him, Bilqazīz. For Laroui, see Laroui, *L'Idéologie arabe contemporaine: essai critique* (Paris: François Maspero, 1967), 33–34; and Laroui, *al-ʿArab wal-Fikr al-Tārīkhī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥaqīqa, 1980), 183–202; Bilqazīz, *Naqd al-Turāth*, 26–27. It is to be noted here that Bilqazīz's analyses throughout his work, as exhaustive and erudite as they may be, are plagued by the same ideologically hegemonic but latent Orientalist effects as the very thinkers he subjects to scrutiny. For a general comparison between Laroui's and Taha's conceptions of Arab consciousness of modernity, see Abdelhalim Mahour Bacha, "al-Ḥadātha al-Gharbiyya wa-Anmāṭ al-Waʿī bi-hā fil-Fikr al-ʿArabī al-Muʿāṣir: Dirāsa Muqārina bayna ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿArwī wa-Ṭāha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān," *Tabayyun* 6, no. 23 (Winter 2018): 103–25.

102. The qualification of "stateless" is intended to stress the qualitative difference between the modern understanding of the concept as a product of state ideology (e.g., the Soviet and Cuban varieties), on the one hand, and the private, personal, and communal, on the other. The latter, at least in the Islamic case, is stateless because premodern Islam did not develop anything like the modern state, hence the qualitative difference and dimension of positive forms of liberty. As I have emphasized throughout, there is good reason to think that the terminological designations "positive" and "negative" liberties are altogether inadequate, but this becomes a problem that the theoretic of translation must solve. On pre-nineteenth-century Islamic "governance" as antithetical to the modern state, see Hallaq, *Impossible State*.

103. See, for instance, Taha, *Fī Uṣūl al-Ḥiwār wa-Tajdīd ʿIlm al-Kalām*, 4th ed. (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2010); Taha, *al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī fil-Ikhtilāf al-Fikrī* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2005), 153–58; Taha, *Suʾāl al-ʿUnf: Bayna al-Iʾtimāniyya wal-Ḥiwāriyya* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Fikr wal-Ibdāʿ, 2017), 171–210; Taha, *ʿAbd al-Malik Būminjal, al-Ibdāʿ fī Muwājahat al-Ittibāʿ* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Fikr wal-Ibdāʿ, 2017), 159–97; Ḥammū al-Naqārī, *Manṭiq Tadbīr al-Ikhtilāf: Min Khilāl Aʿmāl Ṭāha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān* (Beirut: al-Shabaka al-ʿArabiyya lil-Abḥāth wal-Nashr, 2014). Needless to say, the concept of *ḥiwār* in Taha's philosophy warrants monographic attention.

104. A theme articulated in chapter 4.

105. At the time of this writing, for instance, a new three-volume work has appeared. See Taha, *Dīn al-Ḥayāʾ: Min al-Fiqh al-Iʾtimārī ilā al-Fiqh al-Iʾtimānī*, 3 vols. (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Fikr wal-Ibdāʿ, 2017).

106. Taha, *Būminjal, al-Ibdāʿ*, 128–31.

107. This is a major theme in his *Rūḥ al-Dīn*, the main concern of chapter 6.

108. I will discuss these concepts throughout chapter 6.

109. Taha, *Suʾāl al-Akhlāq: Musāhama fil-Naqd al-Akhlāqī lil-Ḥadātha al-Gharbiyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2000), 115n6: "Nurīdu an nunabbih hunā ilā annanā sawfa najtahid qadr al-imkān . . . fī waḍʿ jihāzinā min al-mafāhīm fī istiqlāl ʿan namaṭ al-muṣṭalaḥāt al-ajnabiyya, wa-dhālika bi-istithmār khaṣāʾiṣ al-lugha al-ʿarabiyya fil-taʿbīr wal-tablīgh wa-kadhā bil-ʿamal bil-furūq al-latī takhtaṣṣ bi-hā al-dalālāt fī hādhihi al-lugha." See also Raḍwān Marḥūm's

introduction to Taha's *Su'āl al-Manhaj: Fī Ufuq al-Ta'sīs li-Unmūdhaj Fikrī Jadīd* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Fikr wal-Ibdāʿ, 2015), 26.

110. In the epilogue to *al-Ḥaqq al-ʿArabī fil-Ikhtilāf al-Falsafī* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2006), 291, for instance, Taha tells the reader that this final section does not summarize the arguments of the book but represents a rebuttal to possible objections regarding some issues he has raised earlier. "If the reader wishes to find the conclusions [of the book] consolidated and summarized, he should direct himself to the concluding parts of the eight chapters making up this book." In *Tajdīd al-Manhaj fī Taqwīm al-Turāth* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2007), 15–16, on the other hand, he summarizes the arguments of the entire book, with a view to making it accessible to the reader.

111. Obtaining his first graduate degree in 1972 and the second, the doctorat d'État, in 1985. See Ḥammū al-Naqārī, *Manṭiq Tadbīr al-Ikhtilāf: Min Khilāl Aʿmāl Ṭāha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān* (Beirut: al-Shabaka al-ʿArabiyya lil-Abḥath wal-Nashr, 2014), 10.

112. For a biographical sketch, see Mohammad Hashas, "Taha Abderrahman's Trusteeship Paradigm: Spiritual Modernity and the Islamic Contribution to the Formation of a Renewed Universal Civilization of Ethos," *Oriente Moderno* 95 (2015): 67–105, at 71–72; Taha, *A Global Ethic: Its Scope and Limits* (Abu Dhabi: Taba Foundation, 2008), vii; Taha, *Language Matters*, v.

113. The biographical details pertaining to what has been called his "beleaguered existence" during this period are well known to Taha's circle of students, now senior, even retired professors. I am indebted to some of them for shedding light on this aspect of his intellectual life. An index of the exclusion to which he was subjected may be seen in Bilqazīz's work. In *Naqd al-Turāth*, Taha makes no appearance whatsoever, and in the massive, edited volume (with Muḥammad Jamāl Bārūt), *Al-Thāqafa al-ʿArabiyya fil-Qarn al-ʿIshrīn: Ḥaṣīla Awwaliyya* (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2011), Taha receives attention as a logician in no more than two pages from the pen of ʿAbd al-Salam Bin Mays, "Al-Dirāsāt al-Manṭiqiyya wa-Manāhij al-Manṭiq fil-Waṭan al-ʿArabī," 544–51, at 548–50.

114. Taha, *Rūḥ al-Dīn: Min Ḍīq al-ʿAlmāniyya ilā Siʿat al-I'timāniyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2012), 13–15.

1. "Rethinking the Islamic Tradition"

1. The article first appeared in *Afkār* 123 (January 1996): 5–23, and was published as chapter 1 in *Su'āl al-Manhaj: Fī Ufuq al-Ta'sīs li-Unmūdhaj Fikrī Jadīd*, ed. Raḍwān Marḥūm (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Fikr wal-Ibdāʿ, 2015), 41–57. (Henceforth cited as *KNN*.)

2. See introduction, note 1.

3. "Al-Uṣūl al-Naẓariyya al-Takāmuliyya fil-Ishtighāl bil-Turāth," *al-ʿIlm* (February 18, 1994), published as chapter 2 in *Su'āl al-Manhaj*, 59–70. (Henceforth cited as *UNIT*.)

4. *KNN*, 42: "*Al-tathqīf ʿibāra ʿan takwīn wa-tawjīh yatimmāni bi-ḥasab qiyam waṭaniyya marghūb fīhā wa-maṭlūb al-ʿamal bihā.*" It will be noted that Taha does not define *waṭanī* here, for the term in modern Arabic is somewhat equivocal and bears connotations of either "the national" as the product of the modern nation-state or the ethnonational that represents communal ideas and feelings of belonging to a shared language and norms.

5. *KNN*: "*Fa-takūn al-ḥaḍāra akhaṣṣ min al-thaqāfa, li-anna kull qīma insāniyya hiya qīma waṭaniyya, wa-laysat kull qīma waṭaniyya qīma insāniyya.*"

6. *KNN*, 43: "*Inna al-turāth al-Islāmī al-ʿArabī huwa, ʿalā al-ijmāl, ʿibāra ʿan jumlat al-maḍāmīn wal-wasāʾil al-khiṭābiyya wal-sulūkiyya allatī tuḥaddid al-wujūd al-kasbī (aw al-intājī) lil-insān al-Muslim al-ʿArabī, ʿalā muqtaḍā qiyam makhṣūṣa bāqiya baʿḍuhā ʿalā ḥāl al-iʿtibār wa-ṣāra baʿḍuhā ilā ḥāl al-ilghāʾ, in ṭumūḥan ilā al-taraqqī aw wuqūʿan fil-taraddī.*"

7. The loci classici of this concept is Qurʾān 2:286 and 33:58. See Naṣr al-Dīn b. Muḥammad al-Samarqandī, *Tafsīr al-Samarqandī al-Musammā Baḥr al-ʿUlūm*, ed. ʿAlī Muʿawwaḍ and ʿĀdil ʿAbd al-Mawjūd, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1993), 1:241–42; Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī al-Musammā Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, 13 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005), 3:154ff.

8. See Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī, al-*Risāla*, ed. Muḥammad Sayyid Kīlānī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1969), 14–17. Note also Shāfiʿī's references here to the entwinement of ʿilm and ʿamal, which Taha will develop into a theory. However, he does not invoke Shāfiʿī explicitly.

9. *HIF* = al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī fil-Ikhtilāf al-Fikrī (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2005).

10. Possibly, because *KNN* was written before the appearance of Ṭarābīshī's major works on the relevant issues of *turāth*, especially his series Naqd Naqd al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī. See bibliography.

11. *TM* = Tajdīd al-Manhaj fī Taqwīm al-Turāth (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2007).

12. Taha, *Rūḥ al-Dīn: Min Ḍīq al-ʿAlmāniyya ilā Siʿat al-Iʾtimāniyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2012), 64 (henceforth cited as *RD*): "*Inna baʿḍa al-ḥaqāʾiq al-dīniyya lā tuʿraf illā baʿda mumārasatihā wa-hākadhā fa-bi-wāsiṭat al-ʿamal al-dīnī tanfatiḥ fil-ʿilm abwāb wa-taʿinnu āfāq lam takun takhṭur ʿalā al-bāl qabla al-dukhūl fī-hā.*"

13. "Necessary knowledge" is essentially sensory knowledge. I do not need to exercise any form of thinking or reasoning to know that I am in pain when my finger touches a flame. On these forms of knowledge and their theoretical implications, see Wael Hallaq, "On Inductive Corroboration, Probability, and Certainty in Sunnī Legal Thought," in *Islamic Law and Jurisprudence: Studies in Honor of Farhat J. Ziadeh*, ed. Nicholas Heer (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 3–31.

14. It is instructive here to note the depth that Taha's work give to Talal Asad's notion of discursive tradition. See Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle* 17, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2009): 1–30.

15. Taha puts the matter curtly yet effectively: "*Al-tamakkun min asbāb hādhihi al-āliyyāt fī maṣādirihā*" (*KNN*, 52).

16. See chapter 4.
17. See the introduction, section 5, and epilogue, section 1.
18. For a discussion of the Is/Ought and Fact/Value distinctions, see section 5 of this chapter, and chapter 5, section 2.
19. See the introduction.
20. *UNIT*, 60: "*Lā istiqlāla fil-manhaj bi-ghayri al-khurūji min martabat istinsākh al-manhaj ilā martabat al-qudra ʿalā istinbāṭ naẓīrihi.*"
21. *UNIT*, 62: "*Fal-tadāwul idhan huwa ʿibāra ʿan al-baqāʾ ʿalā al-ʿamal al-mutaʿaddī nafʿuh ilā al-ghayr, fa-yakūn tawāṣulan wa-tafāʿulan, wal-mutaʿaddī nafʿuh ilā al-ājil, fayakūnu takhalluqan wa-taqarruban.*" For a lengthy justification and explanation of *tadāwul*, see Taha, *Tajdīd al-Manhaj fī Taqwīm al-Turāth* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2007), 243–59. I think it is here that Nāṣīf Naṣṣār misinterprets Taha, for he appears to ignore the role of the concept of ʿamal in the task of theory and philosophy. Naṣṣār's concept of *tafalsuf* (which would encompass the Tahan *naẓar/tanẓīr*) appears to me to be precisely what Taha wants to critique in the "civilization of speech." This is to say that the components of ʿamal-mysticism-formative praxis are not only missing from Naṣṣār's project; they also explain his differences from, and disagreement with, our philosopher. Probably because only *al-Ḥaqq al-ʿArabī fil-Ikhtilāf al-Falsafī* was Naṣṣār's target, it seems he did not appreciate the ethical dimension that governs in Taha's project. See Naṣṣār, "Al-Tawāṣul al-Falsafī wal-Majāl al-Tadāwulī," *al-Mustaqbal al-ʿArabī* 347 (December-January 2008): 8–35. See also Yūsuf Bin ʿAdī, *Mashrūʿ al-Ibdāʿ al-Falsafī al-ʿArabī: Qirāʾa fī Aʿmāl Ṭāha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān* (Beirut: al-Shabaka al-ʿArabiyya lil-Abḥāth wal-Nashr, 2012), 198–205; Taha, *al-Ḥaqq al-ʿArabī fil-Ikhtilāf al-Falsafī* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2006).
22. ʿAbd al-Salām Būzibra, *Ṭāha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān wa-Naqd al-Ḥadātha* (Beirut: Jadawel, 2011), 184.
23. See chapter 6, especially sections 1 and 5.
24. In MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*: *Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), but also in MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).
25. See note 68 to this chapter.
26. See note 68 to this chapter.
27. Indigenous, because Taha's term for this division of the sciences is *maʾṣūl*, namely, it has "Islamic roots," an Islamic *aṣl*. My translation is, I think, apt because its counterpart is *manqūl*, namely, that which has been transferred, transported, imported, transplanted.
28. Taha does not give this particular example, but it is likely what he has in mind. For the triadic basis of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, see Sayf al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Āmidī, *al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām*, 3 vols. (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Muḥammad ʿAlī Ṣubayḥ, 1968), 1:6.
29. Ghazālī wrote three works on Aristotelian logic, of three different lengths, the shortest representing a basic introduction and the longest the most advanced. The longest is Ghazālī, *Miʿyār al-ʿIlm fī Fann al-Manṭiq*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1961), whereas the shortest is Ghazālī, *al-Qisṭās al-Mustaqīm* (Cairo:

Dār al-Thaqāfa al-ʿArabiyya, 1962). In between is Ghazālī, *Miḥakk al-Naẓar fī ʿIlm al-Manṭiq*, ed. Muḥammad al-Naʿsānī and Muṣṭafā al-Dimashqī (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Adabiyya, n.d.).

30. See Abū al-Walīd Ibn Rushd, *Tafsīr Mā Baʿd al-Ṭabīʿa*, ed. Maurice Bouyges, 4 vols. (Beirut: Imprimerie catholique, 1938–52); English translation: *Ibn Rushd's Metaphysics*, trans. Charles Genequand (Leiden: Brill, 1986).

31. For a general but useful account, see ʿAbbās Arḥila, *Faylasūf fil-Muwājaha: Qirāʾa fī fikr Ṭāha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2013), 133–48. See also the introduction, section 4.

32. Felicitas Opwis, "*Maṣlaḥa* in Contemporary Islamic Legal Theory," *Islamic Law and Society* 12, no. 2 (2005): 182–223; Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunnī* Uṣūl al-Fiqh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 162–206.

33. Particularly in his *Shifāʾ al-Ghalīl*. See Hallaq, *History of Islamic Legal Theories*, 162, 168.

34. See Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Faqīh wal-Mutafaqqih*, ed. Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and ʿĀdil al-ʿAzāzī, 2 vols. (Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1966), 1:97–104, 114–19; ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī, *Lawāqiḥ al-Anwār al-Qudsiyya fī Bayān al-ʿUhūd al-Muḥammadiyya*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005), 10–27.

35. Omar Farahat, *The Foundation of Norms in Islamic Jurisprudence and Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 66–67, 101–12, 142–52.

36. That is, labeling as Islamist, liberal, Marxist, or otherwise, since, as noted in the introduction, he is militating against the entire range of these epistemological forms. I say "largely refrains," because he does deploy a critique of these "campaigns" in *Rūḥ al-Dīn* (*RD*), among other, more recent publications.

37. The term *ʿiqadī* is a neologism in modern Arabic, one that has been made to derive from the root "*ʿ.Q.D.*" It is taken to be an adjective deriving from the nominal form *ʿaqīda*, "creed." The *fatḥa* on the *qāf* must be maintained to distinguish its derivation from *ʿiqd*, not *ʿaqd*, the latter connoting contract and contractual transactions. See Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Fayrūzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1998), 300 (under *ʿ.Q.D.*).

38. Abū al-Walīd Ibn Rushd, *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī-mā bayna al-Ḥikma wal-Sharīʿa min Ittiṣāl*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAmāra (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1983), 33. Cf. George Hourani's translation in *Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (London: Luzac: 1961), 50.

39. Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. Saʿīd Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Taqrīb li-Ḥadd al-Manṭiq wal-Madkhal ilayh bil-Alfāẓ al-ʿĀmmiyya wal-Amthila al-Fiqhiyya*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazyūdī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.).

40. See previous note.

41. Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 105–14. Arguably, al-Fakhr al-Rāzī had already made a similar critique, possibly an important source of inspiration and content for Ibn Taymiyya. See Bilal Ibrahim, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Ibn al-Haytham, and Aristotelian Science: Essentialism Versus Phenomenalism in Post-Classical Islamic Thought," *Oriens* 41 (2013): 379–431, at 394–411 and 417–27.

42. For an example of this analysis, see Gil Anidjar, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Christianity," *Interventions* 11, no. 3 (2009): 367–93.

43. The first edition of this work was published in 1994. The most notable critical work published before *Tajdīd al-Manhaj* was *al-ʿAmal al-Dīnī wa-Tajdīd al-ʿAql*, 4th ed. (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2006), published originally in 1989.

44. The important field of dialectic is yet to be excavated. Two pioneering works are Larry Benjamin Miller, "Islamic Disputation Theory: A Study of the Development of Dialectic in Islam from the Tenth Through Fourteenth Centuries" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1984); and Walter Young, *The Dialectical Forge: Juridical Disputation and the Evolution of Islamic Law* (New York: Springer, 2017). See also Abdessamad Belhaj, *Argumentation et dialectique en Islam: formes et séquences de la manāẓara* (Louvain: Presses universitaires, 2010). Taha rearticulates the dialectical method in the context of his critique of modernity in *Fī Uṣūl al-Ḥiwār wa-Tajdīd ʿIlm al-Kalām*, 4th ed. (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2010).

45. On denuded rationality, see chapter 4, section 2.

46. *TM*, 27: "*anna al-naṣṣa, bi-dhihābi asbābi intājihi al-ẓarfiyya, al-makāniyya minhā wal-zamāniyya, yaktasib manzila maʿnawiyya mutamayyiza, wa-yaktasī rūḥāniyya khāṣṣa tahibuhu wujūdan thaqāfiyyan mustaqillan yaṣīru bi-hi shāhidan ʿalā maʿānin tamtadd āfāquhā ilā al-insān ḥaythumā kān.*"

47. Published with the subtitle *Qiraʾāt Muʿāṣira fī Turāthinā al-Falsafī* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1993).

48. Interestingly, he also attacks the Arab liberals as much as he does the Arab Left. See Jābrī, *Naḥnu wal-Turāth: Qiraʾāt Muʿāṣira fī Turāthinā al-Falsafī* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1993), 14–15, 57.

49. Jābrī, 58.

50. Jābrī, *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī: Dirāsa Taḥlīliyya Naqdiyya li-Nuẓum al-Maʿrifa fil-Thaqāfa al-ʿArabiyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1986), 88; *TM*, 30.

51. Jābrī, *Naḥnu wal-Turāth*, 58.

52. Jābrī, *Takwīn al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1987), 11–12.

53. Jābrī, *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, 13ff., 251ff., 383ff.

54. For Jābrī, Ibn Rushd is superior to Ibn Sīnā because the former's "project chiefly rests on the separation between philosophy and religion," with a view "to preserving the special identity of each." It is on these grounds that the Maghrib (because it has Ibn Rushd) is deemed by Jābrī to be superior to the Mashriq (which has only Ibn Sīnā)—a nationalist prejudice and a colonialist hangover that Jābrī adopts without self-reflection. See Jābrī, *Naḥnu wal-Turāth,* 9, 213, 234.

55. On the centrality of Ibn Rushd for modernist Arab thought, see ʿAbd al-Ilāh Bilqazīz, *Naqd al-Turāth* (Casablanca: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2014), 257 and passim. It is also worth noting, after Ali Oumlil, that modernist Arab thinkers have charged both Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldun with an excessive burden that far transcends the roles they actually played in their own times. ʿAlī Ūmlīl, *Fil-Turāth wal-Tajāwuz* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 1990), 39; ʿAlī Ūmlīl, *L'histoire et son discourse: essai sur la méthodologie d'Ibn Khaldoun* (Rabat: Éditions techniques nord-africaines, 1979); and his contribution to

Tawfīq Rashīd et al., *al-Falsafa wal-Ḥadātha fīl-Mashrūʿ al-Fikrī li-ʿAlī Ūmlīl* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2011). Further on this in the context of a useful account of Oumlil's ideas, see Bilqazīz, *Naqd al-Turāth*, 259–60.

56. See Muḥammad Waqīdī's analysis in Jābrī, *al-Turāth wal-Ḥadātha*, 265–75, esp. 267.

57. TM, 51: "*Nūrun fīl-bidāya huwa nūr al-ʿaql, wa-nūrun fīl-waṣāʾiṭ huwa nūru al-ʿilm, wa-nūrun fīl-nihāya huwa nūru al-ʿirfān; fa-ṣāḥibu al-ʿaql maʿ al-burhān, wa-ṣāḥibu al-ʿilm maʿ al-bayān, wa-ṣāḥibu al-maʿrifa fī ḥukm al-ʿayān.*" Taha footnotes this as coming from Laṭāʾif al-Ishārāt, 2:194–95 of Ibrāhīm Basyūnī's edition (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 2000), but I could not find it there. However, a cognate statement does appear in the same edition, at 2:90–91. See also Abū al-Ḥasan al-Nūrī, *Maqāmāt al-Qulūb*, ed. Qāsim al-Sāmarrāʾī (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Maʿārif, 1969), 18–19.

58. On *takhrīj*, see Wael Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 44–49; Hallaq, "*Takhrīj* and the Construction of Juristic Authority," in *Studies in Islamic Legal Theory*, ed. Bernard G. Weiss (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 317–35.

59. *TM*, 35: "*muṣālaḥa,*" "*taḥāluf,*" "*fakk al-irtibāṭ,*" "*munāṣara,*" "*iṣṭidām,*" "*ṣadd al-hajmāt,*" "*tafjīr,*" "*laḥẓat al-infijār.*"

60. See chapter 4, section 2.

61. Jābrī, *Takwīn al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, 29–30.

62. Chapter 5, section 2.

63. See introduction, section 5.

64. *TM*, 37; Jābrī, *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, 391.

65. Taha here citing Ḥasan Ḥanafī and Jābrī, *Ḥiwār al-Mashriq wal-Maghrib: Naḥw Iʿādat al-Fikr al-Qawmī al-ʿArabī* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Fikr al-Jadīd, 1990), 30–31.

66. Jābrī, *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, 46–48; Jābrī, *Takwīn al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, 255–60. For a translation of the debate, see Taha Abderrahmane (Taha), "Discussion entre Abū Saʿīd al-Sīrāfī, le grammairien, et Mattā b. Yūnus, le philosophe," *Arabica* 25, no. 3 (September 1978): 310–23.

67. For distinctions between private and public reason in Kant, see Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982–83* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 36. See, more generally, Partha Chatterjee, *Our Modernity* (Rotterdam: Sephis Codesria, 1997).

68. Taha's argument here, however seemingly daring, is not without a venerable pedigree, in and outside of the Islamic tradition. Speaking of the various Greek schools of philosophy, Pierre Hadot (*Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. Michael Chase [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1995]) astutely remarks that each of these schools—the Cynics, Skeptics, Epicureans, Platonists, Stoics—represented "a form of life defined by an ideal of wisdom," which corresponded to a "fundamental inner attitude . . . and its manner of speaking, such as the Stoic use of the percussive dialectic or the abundant rhetoric of the Academicians. But above all every school practices exercises designed to ensure spiritual progress toward the ideal state of wisdom, exercises of reason that will be, for the soul, analogous to the athlete's training or to the application of a medical cure. Generally, they consist, above all, of self-control and meditation. Self-control is fundamentally being attentive to one-self: an unrelaxing vigilance for the

Stoics, the renunciation of unnecessary desires for the Epicureans. It always involves an effort of will ... [including] practical exercises described with such remarkable precision particularly by Plutarch: controlling one's anger, curiosity, speech, or love of riches, beginning by working on what is easiest in order gradually to acquire a form and stable character." But Hadot is careful to distinguish this Greco-Roman form of disciplined practice from its Buddhist counterpart, which is more akin to the Islamic traditions. "Unlike the Buddhist meditation practices of the Far East, Greco-Roman philosophical meditation is not linked to a corporeal attitude but is a purely rational, imaginative, or intuitive exercise." Nonetheless, the relationship between theory and practice was "understood from the perspective of these exercises of meditation. *Theory is never considered an end in itself; it is clearly and decidedly put in the service of practice. . . .* Among the Aristotelians, one is more attached to theoretical activity considered as a way of life that brings an almost divine pleasure and happiness than to the theories themselves. Or, as in the Academicians' school or for the Skeptics, theoretical activity is a critical activity. Or as among the Platonists, *abstract theory is not considered to be true knowledge*: as Porphyry says, 'Beatific contemplation does not consist of the accumulation of arguments or a storehouse of learned knowledge, but in us theory must become nature and life itself'" (59–60, all emphasis mine).

69. *TM*, 41: "*Inna man yanẓur fī kutubi al-Jābrī al-thalātha . . . fa-innahu lā yaẓfar bi-akthar min taʿrīfāt mujmala li-hādhihi al-adawāt al-manqūla.*"

70. Jābrī, *Takwīn al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, 140.

71. *TM*, 46; I could not confirm the reference to Jābrī's *Takwīn al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, at p. 159, as given by Taha.

72. Jābrī, *Takwīn al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, 141; *TM*, 47.

73. See *SA*, 188n1, where Taha favors the term *yaqaẓa* (alertness) over *ṣaḥwa* (awakening) on the grounds that the former denotes an ethical dimension of pervasive and all-governing nature, and not merely "one among many other forms of behavior."

74. *TM*, 90, cited from Ibn Ḥazm, *Risālat Marātib al-ʿUlūm*, printed in *Rasāʾil Ibn Ḥazm al-Andalusī*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Dirāsāt wal-Nashr, 1983), 4:89–90.

75. *TM*, 90; Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿAmal*, ed. Sulaymān Dunya (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif bi-Miṣr, 1964), 349.

76. Taha, following a long tradition, labels such fields as grammar and logic as instrumental (*ʿulūm al-āla*), while theology, philosophy, and law are called ʿUlūm al-Maqāṣid, those substantive fields of inquiry that assume the methodologies of the instrumental sciences and generally take them for granted. In this context, the term *maqāṣid* is not to be confused or conflated with its legal counterpart. Here, Maqāṣid is pitted as a contrast to the methodological sciences, such as logic, in the sense that philosophy and theology, for instance, aim to establish substantive conclusions in regard to metaphysics and ontology (existence), two of their primary concerns. Logic, on the other hand, has no such ambitions, but is rather concerned with valid inferential procedures and modalities of argument, the means to the construction of those fields. This distinction,

however, is not to be taken for granted, since influential thinkers such as Ibn Taymiyya would argue that this is a simplistic distinction and that logic, in particular, is implicated in metaphysics, and therefore prejudges modalities of argument ab initio. This, in fact, was one of his major critiques of Ghazālī, whom he accused of approaching Aristotelian logic with certain intellectual innocence. See Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*, 105–14.

77. Abū al-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī, *Naḥw al-Qulūb* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.); for various contributions on Qushayrī, see the special issue of the *Journal of Sufi Studies* 2 (2013). For another instance of the interaction of Ṣūfism with the political field, see Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū Bakr Ibn ʿArabī, *al-Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya fī Iṣlāḥ al-Mamlaka al-Insāniyya*, ed. ʿĀṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003).

78. *TM*, 90; Ghazālī, *Mīzān al-ʿAmal*, 348: "*Faʾinna al-ʿulūma kullahā mutaʿāwina mutarābiṭa baʿḍahā bi-baʿḍ.*" Emphasis in main text mine.

79. Cited by Taha from Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī's *al-Baṣāʾir wal-Dhakhāʾir. TM*, 91.

80. See sources cited in note 44.

81. This reference to "genetic" might be enlightened by the discussion I offer in Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 9, 153, 224, 316n34.

82. Here, Taha invokes the general principle of *qawāʿid* that "*al-ʿibra fil-taṣarrufāt [hiya] bil-maqāṣid wal-maʿānī lā bil-alfāẓ wal-mabānī*" (*TM*, 100). See Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn b. Ibrāhīm Ibn Nujaym, *al-Ashbāh wal-Naẓāʾir* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1993), 27–55.

83. On the Medinan/Meccan revelations in Shāṭibī's theory, see Hallaq, "The Primacy of the Qurʾān in Shāṭibī's Legal Theory," in *Islamic Studies Presenetd to Charles J. Adams*, ed. Wael Hallaq and Donald Little (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 69–90, at 75–76, 88.

84. See chapter 6, note 8.

85. On intention (*niyya*) in *sharʿī* discourse and practice, see Ibn Nujaym, *al-Ashbāh wal-Naẓāʾir,* 20–26; Paul Powers, *Intent in Islamic Law: Motive and Meaning in Medieval Sunnī Fiqh* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 32–33, 49–50.

86. *TM*, 122: "*Uṣūlī mujaddid . . . wa-mā al-Shāṭibī ʿindanā illā aba al-tadākhul bayna ʿilm al-akhlāq wa-ʿilm uṣūl al-fiqh, fātiḥan bi-dhālika ṭarīqan fī bināʾi al-ʿilm al-Islāmī ʿalā usus al-tansīq al-mutakāmil alladhī lā naʿlam lahu naẓīr fil-sābiq wa-lā fil-lāḥiq.*"

87. For instance, ʿAlī Sāmī al-Nashshār makes the compelling argument that Uṣūl al-Fiqh represented the methodology that undergirded and drove the entire intellectual edifice of mainstream, indigenous Islamic sciences. See al-Nashshār, *Manāhij al-Baḥth ʿInda Mufakkirī al-Islām* (Cairo: Dar al-Maʿārif, 1965), *h-z* (v–vii).

88. Hallaq, *History of Islamic Legal Theories*, 162, 168.

89. See Introduction, section 5. *TM*, 122, citing Jābrī, *Bunyat al-ʿAql al-ʿArabī*, 554: "*Wabidhālik yakūn al-Shāṭibī qad dashshana qaṭīʿa ibistimūlūjiyya ḥaqīqiyya maʿ ṭarīqat al-Shāfiʿī wa-kulli al-uṣūliyyīn al-ladhīna jāʾū baʿdahu.*"

90. Hallaq, *History of Islamic Legal Theories*, chap. 5, esp. 162, 168.

91. *TM*, 125: "*ʿIlm uṣūl al-fiqh [huwa] namūdhaj mithālī lil-tadākhul al-dākhilī, idh ẓahara annahu aqrab al-ʿulūm al-turāthiyya ilā al-qiyāmi bil-muqtaḍayāt al-naẓariyya li-majāl al-tadāwul.*"

92. The critique of Ibn Rushd is an extension of the extensive critique directed at Jābrī, which occupies a significant part of *Tajdīd al-Manhaj fī Taqwīm al-Turāth*. The more direct critique in relation to Ibn Rushd extends across pp. 125–233.

93. *TM*, 126: "*Yabdū [anna Ibn Rushd huwa] ṣāḥib al-faḍl ʿalā al-muʿāṣirīn fil-qawl bil-naẓra al-tajzīʾiyya ilā al-turāth.*"

94. Ibn Rushd, *al-Ḍarūrī fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh aw Mukhtaṣar al-Mustaṣfā*, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-ʿAlawī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1994).

95. The title may be translated as "The Decisive Discourse Regarding the Connection Between Philosophy and Sharīʿa." The word for "connection" in this title is *ittiṣāl*, but Taha suggests that it should be the rhyming term *infiṣāl*, i.e., separation. In his translation of the work, George Hourani, with a bias of his own, translates it as "harmony."

96. An important contribution to this effect is Joseph Massad, *Islam in Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

97. See the useful review by Frank Griffel, "Contradictions and Lots of Ambiguity: Two New Perspectives on Premodern (and Postclassical) Islamic Societies," *Bustan: The Middle East Book Review* 8, no. 1 (2017): 1–21.

98. For a detailed elaboration of my concept of Orientalism, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism.*

99. Excessive in the sense that interpenetration was so extensive and deep that certain genres lost, or nearly lost, their original identity, having been transformed, under the influence of mutual dialectic, into not-so-easily identifiable fields of discourse. See, for instance, Robert Wisnovsky, "Philosophy and Theology (Islam)," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, vol. 2, ed. R. Pasnau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 698–706; Wisnovsky, "ʿAbduh and the Avicennian Tradition" (Ms., chapter 5, p. 50), to be published as *Post-Classical Arabic Philosophy, 1100–1900: Avicennian Metaphysics Between Arabic Logic and Islamic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). I am grateful to Robert Wisnovsky for generously sharing his work with me prior to publication, and for other forms of help over the years.

2. The Spirit of Modernity

1. *RH = Rūḥ al-Ḥadātha: al-Madkhal ilā Taʾsīs al-Ḥadātha al-Islāmiyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2006).

2. *RH*, 17: "*Wa-hall al-zaman al-Islāmī illā bi-manzilat al-zaman al-akhlāqī alladhī tataḥaqqaq fīhi ẓāhirat al-ḥadātha.*"

3. Taha, *al-Ḥadātha wal-Muqāwama* (Beirut: Maktabat Muʾmin Quraysh, 2007), 20.

4. *RH*, 18: "*Murādunā huwa bayān kayfa anna al-fiʿla al-hadāthī yajid ruqiyyahu fil-mumārasa al-Islāmiyya bi-mā lā yajiduhu fī mumārasatin ghayrihā.*"

5. In *Suʾāl al-Akhlāq: Musāhama fil-Naqd al-Akhlāqī lil-Ḥadātha al-Gharbiyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2000), 92, Taha points to the seventeenth century as the beginning of Western modernity.

6. Taha, *al-Ḥadātha wal-Muqāwama*, 21.

7. Citing Jürgen Habermas without reference to a specific work.

8. It is by now clear, and it will become clearer throughout this book, that Taha uses the term *rūḥ* in two senses, namely, "spirit" and "soul." The Arabic term is thus used homonymously, to indicate two qualitatively different conceptions. "The spirit of modernity" (*rūḥ al-ḥadātha*) refers to a discursive body of ideas or principles, whereas the "soul" and its "spiritual" (*rūḥī* or *rūḥānī*) dimensions connote inner faculties of the human. For a definition of the latter, see chapter 6, section 1, at note 8.

9. Taha provides an English version in a footnote. *RH*, 26n7.

10. This caveat seems to suggest that creative and autonomous formulation of an Islamic modernity can nonetheless adopt certain preexistent elements (Western or otherwise), as long as those adopted elements are subjected to a genuine and internal (*juwwānī*) apparatus of critique, which would make the encounter with the spirit's principles an original and direct engagement, standing on a par with an entirely fresh and unmediated process of application.

11. Taha gives "criticism" as an equivalent to the Arabic *naqd*.

12. See Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, ed. ʿĀmir Ḥaydar and ʿAbd al-Munʿim Ibrāhīm, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2009), 4:73–78, at 74, under *B.Ṣ.R*: "*Al-baṣīra ʿaqīdatu al-qalb [hiya] ism li-mā iʿtuqida fil-qalb min al-dīn wa-taḥqīq al-amr, wa-qīl: al-baṣīra fiṭna. Taqūl al-ʿArab: aʿmā Allāhu baṣāʾirahu ay fiṭanahu.*" Note the qualification "*taḥqīq al-amr,*" i.e., the verification of the matter. See ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Taʿrīfāt*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Marʿashlī (Beirut: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 2007), 105. On *taḥqīq* as a critical intellectual method, see Muḥammad Aʿlā b. ʿAlī al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn*, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2006), 1:336 (under "*taḥqīq*").

13. For *ijtihādic* elements in *taqlīd*, see Wael Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–23. See also Sherman Jackson, *Islamic Law and the State: The Constitutional Jurisprudence of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

14. In reference to the influential work by Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage, 1964).

15. Note that "separation" (*faṣl*) is a subcategory of differentiation (*tafṣīl* or *tafrīq*), the latter being the principle that underlies a conceptual distinction, whereas the former is the actual separation, segregation (and we might even say fragmentation) within what is otherwise an integral unity of a phenomenon.

16. Or principle of universalization. As with the first principle, the second and third principles are afforded English equivalents by Taha himself. Although alternatives can be given, I have decided to use his own terms in this context.

17. *RH*, 175n1.

18. See Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); N. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006); Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); but also Barbara Fuchs, *Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam, and European Identities*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), which treats imperial identity-formation through mimesis.

19. See, for instance, George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); Jonathan Lyons, *The House of Wisdom: How the Arabs Transformed Western Civilization* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009); John M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); George Makdisi, *The Rise of the Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981); Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Edward Grant, *The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages: Their Religious, Institutional, and Intellectual Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 22–26; Gilbert Paul Verbit, *The Origins of the Trust* (n.p.: Xlibris, 2002). See also the various contributions of John Makdisi, including "The Islamic Origins of the Common Law," *North Carolina Law Review* 77, no. 5 (1999): 1635–739.

20. On the unique function of academic knowledge in modern Europe, see Wael Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

21. A subject that has received little attention in scholarship, just as other similar themes that have the potential of exhibiting indebtedness to the Islamic heritage of Europe have tended to be overlooked. On the history of the Islamic university, see George Makdisi, *The Rise of the Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981); John Makdisi, "The Islamic Origins of the Common Law," *North Carolina Law Review* 77, no. 5 (1999): 1635–739; Jonathan Porter Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Wael Hallaq, "On Orientalism, Self-Consciousness and History," *Islamic Law and Society* 18, nos. 3–4 (2011): 387–439. On the different uses of "academic knowledge" in premodern Islam and modernity, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism.*

22. For a definition of benchmark, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 73–74.

23. It is, I think, here, in the span of this process, that the work of such scholars as W. Mignolo and E. Dussel intersects with my arguments. Their somewhat earlier dating of the origins of modernity as a colonialist project should be seen as the stage that prepared for and immediately generated the more crystalized phenomenon I identify as the beginning of modernity par excellence. See Dussel, "Eurocentrism and Modernity," *Boundary 2* 20, no. 3 (Autumn 1993); Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

24. Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nışancioğlu's argument in *How the West Came to Rule*: *The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism* (London: Pluto, 2015) is no more sustainable than similar others. The Ottoman threat to Atlantic Europe is said to have contributed to the rise of capitalism by virtue of forcing Western European countries to find markets and economic opportunities westward, across the Atlantic. At the same time, the capitulatory commercial privileges given to them by the Ottomans permitted access to raw materials and staple commodities of which they would have otherwise been deprived. The idea conveyed here is that the emergence of capitalism cannot be explained through an exclusive

focus on the English countryside. While the idea of the need for a more "global" and *longue durée* approach is irreproachable, it fails to account for the *uniqueness of the capitalist structures* arising in Western Europe (mainly in Britain and the Netherlands). The Ottoman threat itself cannot be linked to that particular structure, just as the alleged "breakthrough to capitalism" already made in medieval Buddhist China and pre-Tokugawa Japan can hardly be said to have developed, much less articulated, the structural features that became necessary for the rise of European capitalism. See Randall Collins, "An Asian Route to Capitalism: Religious Economy and the Origins of Self-Transforming Growth in Japan," *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 6 (1997): 843–65. Collins realizes that these Asian forms could not sustain the development of an industrial revolution, a puzzle left for "further study." Any student of Islamic history can make similar arguments. The question that needs to be answered is what made that differential possible, a differential that possessed exclusively European roots but one that undeniably harnessed the global world as its laboratory.

25. See works cited in notes 18, 23, and 24.

26. This argument has been made at length in Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism.*

27. In speaking of the conflictual binaries that Western hegemony has bequeathed to the Muslim world, Taha enumerated the binary between "colonizer's culture and indigenous culture" (*thaqāfat al-mustaʿmir wa-thaqāfat al-aṣl*) and between "modernity" and "indigeneity" (*al-ḥadātha wal-aṣāla*). Note here the qualitative distinction between modernity and colonialism. Taha, *al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī fil-Ikhtilāf al-Fikrī* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2005), 86.

28. Under the subheading of "universalization" (*RH*, 29), Taha states that modernity does not remain confined to the society in which it originally arose. The products of modernity, including its values like the "liberation of human kind," travel to other societies irrespective of the historical and cultural differences between the two sides, i.e., the exporting and importing societies: "*Lā tabqā al-ḥadātha ḥabīsat al-mujtamaʿ al-ladhī nashaʾat fīh, bal anna muntajātuhā . . . tartaḥilu ilā mā siwāh min al-mujtamaʿāt, ayyan kānat al-furūq al-tārīkhiyya wal-thaqāfiyya bayna al-ṭarafayn,* thumma taʾkhudhu ʿalā al-tadrīj fī maḥw hādhihi al-furūq . . . ḥattā aṣbaḥa al-irtiḥāl yaʿummu kawkabanā min aqṣāh ilā aqṣāh, fātiḥan bi-dhālika ʿahdan jadīdan fil-ḥadātha huwa ʿahd al-ʿawlama*" (emphasis mine). In a personal communication (May 28, 2018), Taha cautioned that the erasure of cultural differences must also meet the condition of nonhegemony, a condition lacking in the existing form of globalization (which is "*ʿawlama muhaymina*"). See also the appendix, paragraph 6.

29. *RH*, 77–98, discussed in chapter 3.

30. For a detailed critique of globalization as a materialist phenomenon, see Taha, *Suʾāl al-ʿAmal: Baḥth ʿan al-Uṣūl al-ʿAmaliyya fil-Fikr wal-ʿIlm* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2012), 209–17.

31. Amply attesting to this analysis is Taha, *Suʾāl al-ʿUnf: Bayna al-Iʾtimāniyya wal-Ḥiwāriyya* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Fikr wal-Ibdāʿ, 2017).

32. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 74–75, 80–81, 89–90.

33. In a personal communication, Taha counters that the distinction is warranted on the grounds that "not every agent who attains intellectual majority is a critic and not every critic [is in possession of] intellectual majority" (*laysa kull rāshid nāqid, wa-lā kull nāqid rāshid*; see appendix, paragraph 2). Insofar as I can tell, the only way to resolve the difficulty raised by the second part of this statement is to give *naqd* (critique) a conceptual scope that exceeds the boundaries of majority (*rushd*). Yet, in his section on *naqd* in *RH*, 26–28, the relationship between this principle and the principle of majority is not discussed.

34. Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?," in *Immanuel Kant*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 17–22, at 17.

35. For this last qualification, see Partha Chatterjee, *Our Modernity* (Rotterdam: Sephis Codesria, 1997).

36. See chapter 5, section 4.

37. See chapter 1, sections 2 and 5.

38. See the important work of Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), representing a narrative that I read as the exception that proves the rule. Further on this, see Wallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 282n28, and note 85 to this chapter.

39. Taha rearticulates the dialectical method in the context of his critique of modernity in Taha, *Fī Uṣūl al-Ḥiwār wa-Tajdīd ʿIlm al-Kalām*, 4th ed. (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-ʿArabī, 2010). On Jadal and Munāẓara (debate and "dialectical disputation") in the premodern Islamic tradition, see Larry Benjamin Miller, "Islamic Disputation Theory: A Study of the Development of Dialectic in Islam from the Tenth Through Fourteenth Centuries" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1984); and Walter Young, *The Dialectical Forge: Juridical Disputation and the Evolution of Islamic Law* (New York: Springer, 2017). See also Abdessamad Belhaj, *Argumentation et dialectique en Islam: formes et séquences de la manāẓara* (Louvain: Presses universitaires, 2010). See also Ḥammū al-Naqārī, *Manṭiq Tadbīr al-Ikhtilāf: Min Khilāl Aʿmāl Ṭāha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān* (Beirut: al-Shabaka al-ʿArabiyya lil-Abḥath wal-Nashr, 2014).

40. *RH*, 29: "*Lā tabqā al-ḥadātha ḥabīsat al-mujtamaʿ al-ladhī nasha'at fīh, bal inna muntajātahā al-latī takūn ʿālyat al-tiqaniyya wa-qiyamahā al-latī tadʿū bi-quwwa ilā taḥrīr al-insān tartaḥil ilā mā siwāh min al-mujtamaʿāt, ayyan kānat al-furūq al-tārīkhiyya wal-thaqāfiyya bayna al-ṭarafayn, thumma ta'khudh ʿalā al-tadrīj fī maḥwi hadhihi al-furūq.*"

41. See appendix, paragraph 3: "*wa-lam yakun min sabīl ilā dhalik illā bi-'an astaʿmila al-lugha al-ḥadāthiyya al-ma'lūfa la-hum.*"

42. Appendix, paragraph 4.

43. Appendix, paragraph 5.

44. Appendix, paragraph 5.

45. Appendix, paragraph 7.

46. Appendix, paragraph 8: "*Taghdū al-ḥadātha ḥadathan ḥaḍāriyyan awwal lā sabiq la-hu, wa-ākhir lā lāḥiq la-hu.*"

47. Appendix, paragraph 8. Cf. *RH*, 56, and note 85.

48. For a definition of *fiṭra*, see chapter 6, note 8.

49. Appendix, paragraph 9.

50. Appendix, paragraph 10.

51. Appendix, paragraph 2.

52. This much can be gleaned from appendix, paragraph 2.

53. See Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, 6–12.

54. This is the main argument of Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*.

55. René Guénon, *East and West*, trans. Martin Lings (Ghent, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), 24–25, 43, 69–70, 80.

56. See also Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *The Mark of the Sacred*, trans. M. B. De Bevoise (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

57. See, for instance, chapter 6.

58. *RH*, 36: "*Anna wiṣāyat al-aqwā al-khārijī ʿināya bil-aḍʿaf.*"

59. *RH*, 37: "*Fa-lam yathbut annahum ṣādarū al-sulṭa al-siyāsiyya wa-iḥtakarūhā li-anfusihim, wa-ishtaṭṭū fī ḥukmihim ka-mā ṣādarahā wa-iḥtakarahā wa-ishtaṭṭa fī-hā rijāl 'al-iklīrūs' fī tārīkh al-mustaʿmir.*"

60. It seems that Taha does not charge the layperson with such a responsibility, following the classical juristic doctrine that laymen may exercise *taqlīd*, i.e., following or imitating a higher authority.

61. *RH*, 38: "*Al-intiqāl min al-ibdāʿ al-muqallid ilā al-ibdāʿ al-mubdiʿ.*"

62. *RH*, 40: "*Fa-qad yūjad al-infiṣāl wa-lā irtiqāʾ maʿhu, ka-mā annahu qad yūjad al-irtiqāʾ wa-lā infiṣāl maʿhu; fa-idhan, al-ṭarīq al-Islāmī fil-ḥadātha yaljaʾ ilā al-infiṣāl ḥaythu yajib wa-ilā al-ittiṣāl ḥaythu yajib; fa-hya bi-ḥaqq ḥadāthat qiyam lā ḥadāthat zaman.*" The referent of the last word is linear time since Taha does recognize "Islamic time" (*al-zaman al-Islāmī*) as ethical.

63. On these and on the rise of sociopathologies, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 186, 192–96.

64. It is clear that Taha has in mind here the writings of the Frankfurt School in general and Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic* in particular. See *RH*, 43n28.

65. See, e.g., Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract*, trans. Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995). Taha is almost certainly referring here to the work of Hans Jonas, which he discusses elsewhere. See chapter 5, section 4.

66. On the seen/unseen realms, see the various discussions in chapter 6.

67. In general terms, *khabar* is a form of authoritative text that includes a Qurʾānic verse, a Prophetic narrative (or traditions), or even Companion reports (or *āthār*).

68. See Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 146, 233, 235.

69. Taha does not capitalize on Louis Althusser here, but a fleshing out of Taha's position would be eminently consistent with the latter's notion of an Ideological State Apparatus. See Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (London: Verso, 2014), 232–72.

70. See chapter 6.

71. *RH*, 47: "*Inna al-mabādiʾ al-latī bunyat ʿalayhā hādhihi al-rūḥ ʿarafathā kathīrun min al-ḥaḍārāt al-māḍiya, faḍlan ʿan al-ḥaḍāra al-Islāmiyya.*"

72. See my critique of this point in section 3 of this chapter.

73. On this problem, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism.*

74. A recent forceful argument in support of Taha's thesis here is Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). See also Larry Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism* (Cambridge. MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

75. In *Su'āl al-Akhlāq*, 38–40, he also points to Kant's paradigmatic concept of duty as a reincarnation of its Christian counterpart, following in this Anscombe and others. See G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958): 1–19.

76. In all likelihood, Taha means by this the kind of residues exemplified by Kant's concept of duty. See previous note.

77. *RH*, 50: "*Al-faṣl bayna al-siyāsī wal-iqtiṣādī.*" It is not clear to me what Taha is referring to when he speaks of the "separation between the political and the economic."

78. In the most characteristic sense that legislation is not man-made in the modern liberal sense.

79. In the epilogue, section 1, I develop this concept as individuated positive liberty, in contradistinction to its ideological positive counterpart.

80. See chapter 6.

81. In the epilogue, I develop the concept of palliatives in relation to etiology and critique.

82. *RH*, 52: "*Tamtali'u nufūsu baʿḍi muktashifīhā bi-ʿaẓmati al-ladhī waḍaʿahā wa-saṭṭarahā.*"

83. Taha does not explicitly refer to Foucault here, but his meaning in terms of technologies of the self is clear. Without this interpolation, the range of significance of "*mujāhadat al-nafs*" would not be properly comprehended by English-language users.

84. *RH*, 56: "*Bal limā lā yaqdir [al-insān] ʿalā an yubdiʿ namaṭan fil-ḥayāt laysa min jinsi al-ḥadāthati nafsihā, namaṭan yakhruj kulliyyan ʿan ṭawrihā fī tārīkh al-bashariyya, ilā ṭawrin yatasammā bi-ghayri ismihā.*"

85. The paradigmatic force of universality as global hegemony is demonstrable precisely in the fact that the Enlightenment and its philosophers went against Kant on the matter of imperialism and colonialism. In his otherwise insightful and persuasive *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), Sankar Muthu attempts to "pluralize" the Enlightenment by showing that Diderot, Kant, and Herder stood against empire and colonialism. However, this cannot change the ultimate fact that the central domains of Enlightenment not only systemically and systematically promoted colonialism on the intellectual level; they were in fact instrumental in building the projects of empire and colonization. We need nothing more than Muthu's own testimony, on the first page of his book, to the effect that the anti-imperialists represented a "historically anomalous" and "unique" phenomenon. Strikingly, Muthu argues, "virtually every prominent and influential European thinker in the three hundred years before the eighteenth century and nearly the full century after it were either agnostic toward or enthusiastically in favor of imperialism" (1). That the exceptions Muthu studied should render unwarranted our

speaking of "an overriding Enlightenment project" is itself an unwarranted proposition, for the very fact that the anti-imperialists were buried under the dominant narrative of imperializing and that they remained "understudied" until Muthu's work is further testimony that, insofar as empire was concerned, there was in effect one Enlightenment. This affirmation rests on certain conditions of felicity that gave teeth to the project, whereas the project of Muthu's heroes had no effective or paradigmatic intellectual force to speak of.

86. On this theme, see Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 166–217; Charles Taylor, "What's Wrong with Negative Liberty," in *The Idea of Freedom: Essays in Honor of Isaiah Berlin*, ed. Alan Ryan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 175–93.

87. Needless to say, this particular requirement of psychological internalization is a reenactment of the technology of the self that comprises the duty to pay *zakāt* and *ṣadaqa* and to establish *waqfs* and the like. See Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 110–38.

88. Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 6–12; Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 11–12, 23–25, 33–41, and passim.

89. Taha's neologism is "*iqtiṣādawī*," an apt translation, I think, of the French and English "économisme/economism."

90. *RH*, 59: "*Māhiyyat al-insān māhiyya akhlāqiyya*." See also Taha, *Su'āl al-Akhlāq*, 147.

91. On this theology, see Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 14–17; Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 34, 125–26, 150–55, 209, 214–15, and passim.

92. *RH*, 61: "*Yartaqī bil-insān ilā rutbat al-iḥsān*" (lit. "lifts humans to the rank of goodness").

93. *RH*, 62: "*Al-ḥadātha tuthabbit al-fikr al-fardānī*." The term *tuthabbit* may also connote "to affirm," "to enhance," "to boost," or "to bolster," among similar others.

94. A powerful anthropological critique of secularism may be found in the work of Hussein A. Agrama, *Questioning Secularism: Islam, Sovereignty, and the Rule of Law in Modern Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); and Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

95. *RH*, 65: "Cosmic order" here is derived from the following language: "*Fa-man dhā al-ladhī lā yarā fil-ʿadl wal-musāwāt wal-ḥurriyya wal-karāma wa-siwāhā qiyaman lā tashmal hādhā al-kawn al-ladhī bayna aydīnā fa-ḥasb, bal yashmal al-akwān jamīʿan, sawāʾa tilka al-latī naʿlam bi-wujūdihā aw al-latī yumkin an nataṣawar imkān wujūdihā*."

96. *RH*, 66: "*Kawniyya siyāqiyya*."

97. See, e.g., www.himayalanconsensus.org/african+resolution.

3. Islamic Applications of Modernity's Spirit

1. *RH* = *Rūḥ al-Ḥadātha: al-Madkhal ilā Taʾsīs al-Ḥadātha al-Islāmiyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2006).

2. Taha is mostly very cautious in either generalizing his critique or naming those whom he critiques. In such contexts, as is the case here, he often begins with the expression "some (*baʿḍ*) Muslim scholars" or something similar, a mild approach to engagement (especially if we read "*baʿḍ*" in its classical sense of "one" or "a"). Noteworthy, however, is that in his discussion of the Qurʾān, he follows a different pattern, naming specific Muslim thinkers perhaps more freely than in any other part of his writings. Here, we encounter direct references to, and debates with, Muhammad Arkoun, Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābrī, Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd, Abdulkarim Soroush, Ḥasan Ḥanafī, Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, Ṭayyib Tīzīnī, al-Ṣādiq Bilʿīd, and others.

3. See, for instance, al-Ṣādiq Bilʿīd, *al-Qurʾān wal-Tashrīʿ: Qirāʾa Jadīda fī Āyāt al-Aḥkām* (Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Ḥalabī al-Ḥuqūqiyya, 2004), 30–32, 225–27.

4. *RH*, 176: "*Ijtihādun min al-dhāt.*"

5. "Verses" is used advisedly, and justified by Taha on the grounds that the modernist interpreters (but not necessarily all contemporary [*muʿāṣirūn*] "exegetes") did not engage in a systematic and complete gloss on the entirety of the Qurʾānic text, in contrast to their premodern predecessors. See *RH*, 176n3, 177.

6. For a general survey but also critique of such authors, see Jīlānī Miftāḥ, *al-Ḥadāthiyyūn al-ʿArab fil-ʿUqūd al-Thalātha al-Akhīra wal-Qurʾān al-Karīm: Dirāsa Naqdiyya* (Damascus: Dār al-Nahḍa, 2006).

7. Modern Arabic coined at least two verbal nouns to convey the meaning of "humanizing," namely, to render something subject to the formative power of humanism. These are *ansana* and *taʾnīs*, the latter being, I think, awkward and lacking a ready connection to the essential meanings of humanism, since its association with the notion of "companionship" is strong. Nonetheless, Taha prefers to use it.

8. Citing here ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Sharafī, "among others," who explicitly declares his task to be "*nazʿ al-mīthiyya ʿan al-naṣṣ al-dīnī bi-muḥāwalat ansanatihi bi-ʿalmanat al-qirāʾa*" (*RH*, 178n8). For a sample of Sharafī's approach, see Sharafī, "Fī Qirāʾat al-Turāth al-Dīnī: *Al-Itqān fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* Namūdhajan," in *Fī Qirāʾat al-Naṣṣ al-Dīnī*, ed. Kamāl ʿImrān (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyya lil-Nashr, 1990), 11–30.

9. A great many writers and thinkers have adopted such a secularist-humanist approach, most notable of whom is Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd. His hermeneutical method covered not only the Qurʾān, the centerpiece of his project, but also, and to no lesser effect, the iconic writings of Shāfiʿī, Ibn ʿArabī, and Ghazālī. See, for instance, Mafhūm al-Naṣṣ, *Dirāsa fī ʿUlūm al-Qurʾān* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2005); al-Naṣṣ, *al-Naṣṣ wal-Sulṭa wal-Ḥaqīqa: Irādat al-Maʿrifa wa-Irādat al-Haymana* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2000); al-Naṣṣ, *al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī wa-Taʾsīs al-Idyūlūjiyya al-Wasaṭiyya* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1996). For a useful, succinct, yet uncritical account of Abū Zayd's positions, see ʿAbd al-Ilāh Bilqazīz, *Naqd al-Turāth* (Casablanca: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2014), 217–50.

10. See, in particular, chapter 6.

11. *RH*, 181n15.

12. The collection of the Qurʾān has evolved into a major concern of Orientalist scholarship, which has exercised tremendous influence on modern Muslim

thinkers who have dealt with the text. For writings on the process of collection, see, among others, M. Watt, *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970); Harald Motzki, "The Collection of the Qur'ān: A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments," *Der Islam* 78 (2001): 1–34; Hossein Modarressi, "Early Debates on the Integrity of the Qur'ān: A Brief Survey," *Studia Islamica* 77 (1993): 5–39.

13. An elaboration of this central theme may be found in Wael Hallaq, "Qur'ānic Constitutionalism and Moral Governmentality: Further Notes on the Founding Principles of Islamic Society and Polity," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 8, nos. 1–2 (2014): 1–52; Hallaq, "Qur'ānic Magna Carta: On the Origins of the Rule of Law in Islam," in *Magna Carta, Religion and the Rule of Law*, ed. R. Griffith-Jones and Mark Hill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 157–76; and Hallaq, "Groundwork of the Moral Law: A New Look at the Qur'ān and the Genesis of Sharīʿa," *Islamic Law and Society* 16, nos. 3–4 (2009): 239–79.

14. A theme analyzed in detail in Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 73–84.

15. For an elaboration of *ghaybiyya/taghyīb* and *tashhīd*, see chapter 6.

16. Namely, in the sense I have elaborated at length in *Restating Orientalism.*

17. In the overall thrust of his project, I think it is clear that he recognizes their full weight.

18. One can now speak of a scientific consensus on climate and ecological crisis: colossal environmental destruction; massive colonialist and imperialist atrocities and dehumanization; unprecedented forms of political and social violence; the construction of lethal political identities; the poisoning of food and water; extermination of alarming numbers of species; increasingly worrying health threats; indecent disparity between rich and poor; social and communal disintegration; the rise of narcissistic sovereign individualism; a dramatic increase in individual and corporate sociopathologies; an alarming spread of mental health disorders; a "growing epidemic" of suicide, and much more. This list is certainly incomplete; all of these crises aggregately constitute a phenomenon that calls attention to a revaluation of modernist, industrial, capitalist, and chiefly (though not exclusively) liberal values, including secular humanism and anthropocentrism. In this context, a series of premises should be made explicit: (1) the ecological and environmental crisis is endemic to the very modern system producing it, which is to say that the crisis itself is systemic, not contingent; (2) the modern system that cohesively marshals capitalism, technology, industrialism, and a legal system that regulates their conduct is based on forms of knowledge that are claimed to be rational and thus are far from haphazard or accidental; (3) this rationality, in its fully fledged practical manifestations, in effect amounts to nothing short of an epistemology, a conscious, deliberate, and fairly consistent way of understanding, interpreting, and living in the world; and (4) this epistemology lacks sufficient moral and ethical restraints so as to (a) allow living in the world without—to put it minimally—a noticeable penchant for destructiveness, and (b) successfully remedy (if not preempt) ecological and environmental problems as may happen to arise. See Naomi Oreskes, "The Scientific Consensus on Climate

Change: How Do We Know We Are Not Wrong?," in *Climate Change: What It Means for Us, Our Children, and Our Grandchildren*, ed. Joseph F. C. DiMento and Pamela Doughman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 65–99; Sanjay Seth, " 'Once Was Blind but Now Can See': Modernity and the Social Sciences," *International Political Sociology* 7 (2013): 136–51, especially at 144; Stephen M. Gardiner, *A Perfect Moral Storm: The Ethical Tragedy of Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). As Andrew Vincent convincingly argues, it is the very values and practices of liberal justice theory that "constitute the key environmental danger." Vincent, "Liberalism and the Environment," *Environmental Values* 7 (1998): 443–59, at 443. See also Avner de-Shalit, "Is Liberalism Environment-Friendly?," in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, ed. Michael Zimmerman (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998), 386–406.

19. In critique of the *ʿibādāt* as "rituals," see Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 115–16.

20. For an outline of such an exploration, see sources cited in note 13.

21. Italics marked by a bold font in Arabic. *RH*, 189.

22. Note that in this narrative the absolutist monarchial rule over Central and Western Europe is absent as an important element in the rise of the Enlightenment.

23. The Arabic equivalent is *ʿilmī*, here used, as is often the case, not in the sense of technical or exact science, but as sound and solid intellectual endeavors. In the Islamic tradition, "religious," legal-moral, Qurʾānic, and similar studies were classified as *ʿulūm* (sing. *ʿilm*). Modern Arabic, including that of Taha, continues to retain residues of this usage. Incidentally, this linguistic-conceptual history of the term makes for a rich field of research, implicating issues of science and the humanities, and the preeminent relationship between Value and Fact.

24. Further on this point, see the introduction, toward the end of section 4, and epilogue.

25. See T. I. Oizerman, "I. Kant's Doctrine of the 'Things in Themselves' and Noumena," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 41, no. 3 (March 1981): 333–50.

26. *RH*, 193: "*Qabla al-ḥadātha . . . huwa zaman al-wuqūʿ taḥta al-wiṣāya al-ladhī thārat ʿalayhi bil-dhāt al-ḥadātha.*"

27. Yet, contradictions may arise here by virtue of other assertions made to the effect that premodernity, in Islam as elsewhere, suffered from "immaturity." See, for instance, *RH*, 193: "*Qabla al-ḥadātha . . . huwa zaman al-wuqūʾ taḥta al-wiṣāya al-ladhī thārat ʿalayhi bil-dhāt al-ḥadātha.*"

28. *RH*, 198: "*Yuḥaqqiqu lil-insāni bi-dhālika asmā marātib al-takrīm, idh laysa baʿdahā illā martabat al-ulūhiyya.*"

29. I think Mohammad Hashas puts it well when writes that "Abderrahmane [Taha] develops a new task for philosophy. While the Greeks considered that the task of philosophy was to raise questions (Aristotle in focus), and the Europeans considered criticism its primal task (Kant in focus), Abderrahmane [Taha] believes that this age is that of ethical responsibility, so the task of philosophy is to raise a responsible question (*al-suʾāl al-masʾūl*). When there is a question, the there is

a responsibility that follows to answer it (in Arabic, the move is from *al-su'āliyyah* [questioning] to *al-mas'ūliyyah* [responsibility] in philosophy). Accordingly, a question receives an ethical dimension through responsibility; if it is posed, it has to be answered, and the feel of responsibility makes the exercise of answering ethical—'there is no philosophising without ethics.'" Mohammad Hashas, "Taha Abderrahman's Trusteeship Paradigm: Spiritual Modernity and the Islamic Contribution to the Formation of a Renewed Universal Civilization of Ethos," *Oriente Moderno* 95 (2015): 67–105, at 74–75.

30. See chapter 1, note 37, for the term ʿiqadī.

31. On this debate, see Charles Taylor, "Justice After Virtue," in *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. John Horton and Susan Mendus (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), 16–43, at 20; John R. Searle, "How to Derive 'Ought' from 'Is,'" *Philosophical Review* 73, no. 1 (January 1964): 43–58, and the various contributions in W. D. Hudson, ed., *The Is-Ought Question* (New York: St. Martin's, 1969).

32. See chapter 4, note 13, chapter 6, note 4, and next note.

33. *RH*, 201: "[Al-Qalb huwa] *malaka jāmiʿa . . . maṣdar kull al-idrākāt al-insāniyya fī tadākhulihā wa-takāmulihā, ʿaqliyya kānat aw ḥissiya aw rūḥiyya.*"

34. See, for instance, Qur'ān 8:2; 16:106; 26:89, 194; 48:4; 49:7; 50:33, 37; 57:16; 64:11.

35. Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 98ff.

36. *RH*, 203: "*Wa-maʿlūm anna tarsīkh al-akhlāq huwa al-ghāya al-ūlā min al-biʿtha al-Muḥammadiyya.*"

37. *RH*, 203–4: "*Ḥukmiyya jāmida . . . mundafiʿa.*"

38. *RH*, 204: "*Fa-yataʿayyan an nabḥath fil-āyāt al-Qur'āniyya, lā ʿan ʿalāmāt al-māḍī, ḥattā nūqif ṣalāḥiyyatahā ʿalā hādhihi al-ʿalāmāt, wāqiʿīn fī tārīkhiyyatin māḍiwiyya, wa-innamā an nabḥath fī-hā ʿalā ʿalāmāt al-ḥāḍir.*" Note here that Taha's phrase "*wāqiʿīn fī tārīkhiyyatin māḍiwiyya*" bespeaks volumes of the irrelevance of history outside moral instruction.

39. *RH*, 204: "*Al-Qur'ān ikhtaṣṣa bi-qiyam akhlāqiyya wa-rūḥiyya ʿulyā, wal-qiyam lā yanāl minhā tawālī al-zaman ka-mā yanāl min al-waqā'iʿ, bal min al-qiyam mā tanāl min al-zaman wa-lā yanāl min-hā.*"

40. *RH*, 74, esp. n. * (no number).

41. For a discussion of expansive rationality, or enhanced reason, see chapter 4.

42. This bracketed addition is only implied, but not explicitly stated, by Taha. However, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 182–96.

43. This is a central argument of chapters 2 and 4 in Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*.

44. Note here that Taha shifts the meaning of *maṣlaḥa* from its positive Shāṭibian one—which he has endorsed—to a negative concept, often implied in modern Arabic.

45. For a remarkable account that fleshes out and historicizes the rise of interest in the West, see Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism Before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

46. In reference to Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society,* trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage, 1964), on which Taha seems to rely in his critique of technology/ technique.

47. Taha may be underrating the performative power of what he calls procedure. Arguably, the "procedures" generated and made dominant by globalization, with its materialism, consumerism, and technology of social media, possess no weaker technologies of the self, but the crucial difference between these and the moral technologies which he advocates is that, in the former, technologies, ethics, and the crucial element of the "operation on one's self" are virtually lacking. Procedure is indeed an external act, but it is so only to the extent that the subject has no control over its genealogy and modes of operation. But procedure's power to form this subject is undeniable, as Althusser aptly argued for the case of Ideological State Apparatus. On the significance of the practice of "operation on one's self" in the context of Foucault's and Althusser's ideas, see epilogue, section 1.

48. M. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al., vol. 3 (New York: New Press, 1994), 326–48; see also Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1982–83* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 20–21.

49. *RH*, 86. "Single culture" here is the rendering of *thaqāfa wāḥida*. The other meaning of *thaqāfa* in Arabic is "education," but this is obviously not what the context allows for. It is not trite to note here, in contrast to Taha's claim, what the Qur'ān (5:48) says about this point: "*Li-kullin jaʿalnā min-kum shirʿatan wa-minhājā wa-law shāʾa la-jaʿalakum ummatan wāḥida*" ("For each of you ["nation," community] we have given a moral law and way of life. Had God willed, He would have made you one nation/community"). See also epilogue, penultimate paragraph of section 2 and note 20 therein.

50. Cf. Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *The Mark of the Sacred*, trans. M. B. De Bevoise (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 90–124.

51. *RH*, 86–87: "*Yaḥiqqu lanā an nasʾal, hal yanbaghī an yarjiʿa kullu qawmin ilā mā wajadū ʿalayhi ābāʾahum min dīn, fa-yaqtabisūna min-hu akhlāqan yadfaʿūna bi-hā shurūra al-ʿawlama am . . . yanbaghī an yajtamiʿa sādat wa-ʿulamaʾ al-aqwām kulluhā, fa-yanẓurūna fī adyānihim wa-yastanbiṭūna min-hā mā yattafiq ʿalayhi jamīʿuhum, wa-yakūnu hadhā al-muttafaq ʿalayh huwa al-akhlāq al-latī yataṣaddūn bi-hā li-aḍrār al-ʿawlama ka-mā daʿā ilā dhālik baʿḍuhum fī-mā bāta yusammā bi-ʾḥiwār al-adyān'.*"

52. *RH*, 87: "*Nusammīhi bi-ʾdalīl al-zaman al-akhlāqī'.*"

53. *RH*, 87: "*Fī ḍabṭi sulūkihim al-ijtimāʿī wa-taḥqīq wujūdihim al-ḥaḍārī.*"

54. *RH*, 88, ll. 9–10, and last paragraph.

55. *RH*, 89: "*Majāl ʿilāqī akhlāqī.*"

56. *RH*, 89: "*Lammā kānat afʿāl al-insān . . . afʿālan khuluqiyya ṣarīḥa, kāna lā budda an tattajih hādhihi al-afʿāl ilā al-ākhar bi-iʿtibārihi insānan, ayy kāʾin akhlāqī.*" It is to be noted that "*ṣarīḥ*" here has a particular and significant meaning. It is a reference to the unadulterated act, that which is "true" to the "original" state of human beings as moral creatures. It is the standing rule, to which exceptions are nothing but violations of that "true existence."

57. The concepts of *faḍl* and *faḍl al-māl* are of ancient pedigree, having been current in pre-Islamic Arabia and having continued to flourish in the charitable terrains of Islam. See M. M. Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam:*

Studies in Ancient Arab Concepts (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 176–77, 229–50. Here, Taha is drawing heavily on the extensive premodern Islamic concepts and practices of philanthropy.

58. A theme which Taha elaborates in *RH*, 92, paragraph 2.

59. *RH*, 95n10: "*Lā yaghību ʿan fiṭnat al-qāri' annanā nanẓur ilā al-taʿāruf hunā min jānib dalālatihi ʿalā al-tawāṣul bi-wāsiṭat al-khiṭāb.*" See also Taha, *al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī fil-Ikhtilāf al-Fikrī* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2005), 129–30, 143–45.

4. Recasting Reason

1. Originally published in 1989. I here rely on the 4th edition, printed in 2006 in Casablanca by al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī.

2. See Taha, *Al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī fil-Ikhtilāf al-Fikrī* (Casablanca: Al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2005), 56–57, 99ff.

3. Technologies "of the soul" and not "of the self" because the self (*nafs*) in Taha's conception is the seat of desire and self-attribution, and thus of human lordship over all else.

4. This is why Taha often highlights the etymological and conceptual connections between *khalq* (creation) and *khuluq* (ethics), both deriving from the Arabic root *Kh.L.Q.*

5. Taha does not frame the matter in these terms, nor does he employ a theory of central and peripheral domains, but, as we will see, his system of thought recognizes similar conceptions. For a succinct exposition of this theory, see Wael Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 6–12.

6. Taha, *Suʾāl al-Akhlāq: Musāhama fil-Naqd al-Akhlāqī lil-Ḥadātha al-Gharbiyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2000).

7. *Mujarrad* may also be translated as "abstracted," but this will not do justice to the narrower meanings that Taha wants to bestow on this type. So is the term *pure*, which can no longer, especially after Kant, be used without the excess meanings it has accumulated. "Denuded," in the sense of something being stripped of all attachments, captures the Arabic meaning more adequately than any other.

8. On judgment (*taṣdīq*) as a predication of concepts (*taṣawwurāt*) and as integral to definition (*ḥadd*) and quiddity (*māhiyya*), see Wael Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 4–5n4. See also Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Maqāṣid al-Falāsifa*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1961), 33–36; ʿĪsā b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Ījī, *Sharḥ al-Ghurra fil-Manṭiq*, ed. Albīr Naṣrī Nādir (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1983), 112–13; Harry Wolfson, "The Terms *Taṣawwur* and *Taṣdīq* in Arabic Philosophy and Their Greek, Latin and Hebrew Equivalents," *Moslem World* 33 (1943): 114–28.

9. *AD*, 17: "*Al-ʿaql al-mujarrad ʿibāratun ʿan al-fiʿli al-ladhī yaṭṭaliʿu bi-hi ṣāḥibuhu ʿalā wajhin min wujūhi shay'in mā, muʿtaqidan fī ṣidqi hādhā al-fiʿl, wa-mustanidan fī hādha al-taṣdīq ilā dalīlin muʿayyan.*"

10. I occasionally render the term *al-insān* as "man," although the more precise rendering is "human" or "human being." This rendering, forced by English idiom, imposes itself as a requirement of style.

11. The theory of essences was not accepted among Muslim intellectuals across the board. For example, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Ibn Taymiyya, perhaps the two most towering intellectuals of their times, rejected this Porphyrian and Aristotelian doctrine. See Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians*; Bilal Ibrahim, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Ibn al-Haytham, and Aristotelian Science: Essentialism Versus Phenomenalism in Post-Classical Islamic Thought," *Oriens* 41 (2013): 379–431.

12. See also Taha, *Suʾāl al-ʿAmal: Baḥth ʿan al-Uṣūl al-ʿAmaliyya fil-Fikr wal-ʿIlm* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2012), 59–60.

13. Lirerally, *qalb* connotes "heart." Taha deems traditional Islamic scholars to have mostly, but unjustifiably, combined their own notion of reason as an act or a faculty (*quwwa, malaka*) with the Aristotelian concept of essence (*jawhar, dhāt*). See Taha, *Suʾāl al-ʿAmal*, 69–74.

14. *AD*, 19: "*Al-ʿaql huwa imsāku al-qalb li-mā yaṣil ilayhi ḥattā lā yanfalit minhu*."

15. He dedicates a short chapter to these themes in *AD*, 25–39.

16. Perhaps the simplest explanation of the Second Incompleteness Theorem is this:

> First of all, when I say "proved," what I will mean is "proved with the aid of the whole of math." Now then: two plus two is four, as you well know. And, of course, *it can be proved* that two plus two is four (proved, that is, with the aid of the *whole* of math, as I said, though in the case of two plus two, of course we do not need the whole of math to prove that it is four). And, as may not be quite so clear, it can be proved that it can be proved that two plus two is four, as well. And it can be proved that it can be proved that it can be proved that two plus two is four. And so on. In fact, if a claim can be proved, then it can be proved that the claim can be proved. And *that* too can be proved.
>
> Now, two plus two is not five. And it can be proved that two plus two is not five. And it can be proved that it can be proved that two plus two is not five, and so on.
>
> Thus: it can be proved that two plus two is not five. Can it be proved as well that two plus two is five? It would be a real blow to math, to say the least, if it could. If it could be proved that two plus two is five, then it could be proved that five is not five, and then there would be no claim that could not be proved, and math would be a lot of bunk.
>
> So, we now want to ask, can it be *proved* that it can't be proved that two plus two is five? Here's the shock: no, it can't. Or, to hedge a bit: *if* it can be proved that it can't be proved that two plus two is five, then it can be proved as well that two plus two is five, and math is a lot of bunk. In fact, if math is not a lot of bunk, then no claim of the form "claim X can't be proved" can be proved.
>
> So, if math is not a lot of bunk, then, though it can't be proved that two plus two is five, it can't be proved *that* it can't be proved that two plus two is five.

> By the way, in case you'd like to know: yes, it can be proved that if it can be proved that it can't be proved that two plus two is five, then it can be proved that two plus two is five.

George Boolos, "Godel's Second Incompleteness Theorem Explained in Words of One Syllable," *Mind* 103, no. 1 (January 1994): 1–3. All italics in original.

17. Bertrand Russell, "Mathematics and the Metaphysicians," in *Russell, Mysticism and Logic, and Other Essays* (Auckland: Floating Press, 2010), 91–116, at 92.

18. Taha's use of *tiqaniyya* betrays, I think, an Ellulian influence. See Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage, 1964). Noteworthy here is the original French title: *La technique ou l'enjeu du siècle*. On p. xxv, Ellul explains the concept of technique thus: "The term technique, as I use it, does not mean machines, technology, or this or that procedure for attaining an end. In our technological society, technique is the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency . . . in every field of human activity. Its characteristics are new; the technique of the present has no common measure with that of the past." On pp. 3–4, he clarifies further: "Technique certainly began with the machine. It is quite true that without the machine the word technique would not exist. . . . [But:] Technique has now become almost completely independent of the machine, which has lagged far behind its offspring."

19. As in fact Muslims did prior to the nineteenth century. Taha could of course have also marshaled the actual examples of Indian logic and mathematics. See, for example, Jack Goody, *The East in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

20. For lexical definitions of *musaddad*, see notes 26 and 31.

21. Although interest in the subject centers and frames Foucault's and Taha's projects in fundamental ways, Foucault (as well as Butler, as I read her) insists on the necessity of excluding from the purview of the critical, reasoning subject any "juridified" set of prescriptions. Needless to say, the analytical implications of this difference signify a paradigmatic irreconcilability between the two projects. See Judith Butler, "What Is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," in *The Political*, ed. David Ingram (London: Blackwell, 2002), 212–26, at 216. For a useful comparison between Foucault and Taha, see Issam Eido, "Al-Iʿtirāf fil-Majāl al-ʿĀmm: Naqd I'timānī li-Mafhūm Fūkū 'al-Iʿtirāf wal-Sulṭa'" (unpublished ms.). I thank Issam Eido for sharing with me his manuscript before publication.

22. Asifa Quraishi, "The Separation of Powers in the Tradition of Muslim Governments," in *Constitutionalism in Islamic Countries: Between Upheaval and Continuity*, ed. Rainer Grote and Tilmann J. Röder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 63–73, at 65–68; Wael Hallaq, "From Regional to Personal Schools of Law? A Reevaluation," *Islamic Law and Society* 8, no. 1 (2001): 1–26; Wael Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Hallaq, *Impossible State*, chap. 4.

23. On this theme, see Taha's critique in chapter 5, section 4.

24. See also Taha, *Su'āl al-ʿAmal*, 227ff.

25. Here, Taha comes close to maintaining that works and praxis have the effect of reducing, from the inside, the external (and internal) constrains that threaten negative liberty, not to mention their constructive role in the promotion of positive liberty.

26. *AD*, 67: "*Al-ʿaql al-musaddad huwa al-ʿaql al-mujarrad wa-qad dakhalahu al-ʿamal al-sharʿī.*" Notice here the significance of the processual implications of *wāw al-ḥāl*.

27. Here as elsewhere, Taha pits the jurists against the theologians (*Mutakallimūn*) insofar as denuded and guided reasons are concerned. To what extent this comparative critique might revise our scholarly approach to these two groups is a matter that deserves a separate investigation once the full range of his system of thought becomes clearer to us. Put differently, since his entire system of thought departs from what might be called, structurally and methodologically, "postmodern" foundations (where a fix for modernity's problems refuses to operate by the logic and structural assumptions of modernity itself), it is quite possible that his vision of "Islamic studies" might offer—consistent with his thought—a qualitative correction to these studies as Orientalism has thus far conceived them.

28. Taha does not make an explicit reference to such writings, but it is clear that the themes of such a genre (together with the general critique leveled by contemporary Muslim liberals against the Islamists) are implicit in his narrative. For an example of these themes, which are internal to the tradition's praxis and are far more intellectually sophisticated than the mere accusations of the modern Muslim liberals), see Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 120–22, 133–34, 217.

29. Of course, much more can be said of this issue (and Taha does offer a discussion in four dense pages), but for our purposes a brief outline here should suffice.

30. There is much to say of Taha's classification of *taqlīd*, especially in the manner that it lacks gradation and qualitative association with *ijtihād*, at least among the premodern jurists, which he invokes (together with the Mutakallimūn) in this context. For a context in which to evaluate Taha's arguments about *taqlīd* as a graded quality, see Wael Hallaq, *Authority, Continuity and Change in Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–23.

31. While the meaning of *mujarrad* is clear enough (abstracted, denuded), the etymological derivations of *musaddad* and *muʾayyad* are less obvious. In Arabic lexical usage, the root S.D.D. connotes notions of "correctness" and "soundness." "*Saddada al-shayʾ, aṣlaḥahu wa-qawwamahu.*" "*Al-musaddad [huwa] al-muqawwam wal-mustaqīm.*" On the other hand, A.Y.D./A.A.D. connotes "strength" and "invincibility," that which cannot be subverted, converted, or defeated. "*Al-muʾayyad [huwa] al-shadīd wal-qawiyy.*" "*Ayyadahu Allāh qawwāh.*" "*Āda, ishtadda wa-qawiya.*" As for *shadīd* and *shidda*, they signify "*ʿizz and manaʿa,*" again connoting strength and invincibility. See Majd al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Fayrūzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1998), 266 (under *Āda*), 287 (under *Saddada*). For invincibility, see Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, ed. ʿĀmir Aḥmad Ḥaydar and ʿAbd al-Munʿim Ibrāhīm, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2009), 13:225–26 (under *R.K.N.*).

32. Taha must be using the term *rasm* (pl. *rusūm*) in the conventional sense known to Arabic logicians, which is a "definition" of a thing without identifying the qualities that make its quiddity (*māhiyya*). See Muḥammad Aʿlā b. ʿAlī al-Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn*, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2006), 2:263–64. See also note 8.

33. See, nonetheless, chapter 5, note 3, where enhanced reason is strongly implied to be a derivative, or a subcategory, of guided reason, however much it is superior to the latter.

34. Abū al-Ḥasan Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-ʿĀmirī, *al-Iʿlām bi-Manāqib al-Islām*, ed. Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ghurāb (Riyad: Dār al-Aṣālah lil-Thaqāfa wal-Nashr wal-Iʿlām, 1988). I could not locate the term *mulāmasa* in this work, but see pp. 75, 101, 139.

35. For a definition of *tasyīs*, see *AD*, 184. *Tasyīs* is difficult to translate, and its rendering as "politicization" must be understood with qualifications. For Taha, *tasyīs* rests on two principles, both lying within denuded reason: (a) a historicist principle that insists on epochs and eras of the human past as producing phenomena different from, even contradictory to, one another, something that he labels as the theory of "historical dialectics" (*al-jadaliyya al-tārīkhiyya*), and (b) an exclusion, or rejection, of the past as grounds from which paradigmatic exemplars for the present can be constructed. *Tasyīs*, therefore, is the antonym of *takhlīq*, leading life not through political behavior but rather through exemplary moral conduct.

36. See epilogue, section 1.

37. A conception consistent with my arguments in Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), chap. 5.

38. For an enumeration of these phenomena, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 232–33, but the phenomena are to be understood within the overall context of that book's arguments.

39. For a (mostly negative) definition of politicization (*tasyīs*), see note 35.

40. *AD*, 189: "*Iḥtāja al-mutasallifu lā ilā al-taʾammul fil-nuṣūṣ mubāsharatan, bal ilā tajdīd tarbiyatihi.*"

41. Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 73–84: "Both Shariʿa and Sufism, being constituted by an ethical and moral subject matter—down from their epistemological foundations and up to their social dispensations—strove toward the realization of moral ends. Being central paradigms and performative discourses, they may be characterized by what I call a persistent moral benchmark. Benchmarks do not always fully succeed in implementing their desiderata in the real world, but rather stand as reminders and standards against which reality is not only measured but pressured. A persistent benchmark is one whose pressure is greater than those possessed by other benchmarks, especially if its matrix and source of authority stem from a central domain. [For example], the Shariʿa held itself short of developing any concept of limited liability. And it is easy to see why it did so. One of the central benchmarks of the Shariʿa was the notion of *sharʿi* subject, one constituted by moral technologies of the self, technologies in which

ethical and moral liability of the *individual believer*, the subject, stood supreme. This benchmark was not only operative but performative; which is to say that it was not only applied without reticence, but in the process of its operation, it *produced* subjects. The premium value in this configuration was moral accountability, not profit. Money and wealth were of such secondary status (despite the great importance Islam and its Shariᶜa placed on business, profit and material wealth) that they could hardly compete with the fundamental, if not constitutive, concept of ethical duty, moral responsibility, and general accountability of the private, individual person. There was no financial or material consideration in the world, however tempting and important, that could alter or mitigate the benchmark of individual and personal accountability, responsibility and liability. This type of accountability and responsibility was irreducible and constituted the most stubborn feature of the entire culture."

42. *SA*, 63: "*Bayna-mā al-ṣawāb an yakūna al-ᶜaql fiᶜlan min al-afᶜāl wa-sulūkan min al-sulūkāt.*"

43. On the Intellects, see Dimitri Gutas, "Avicenna: The Metaphysics of the Rational Soul," *Muslim World* 102 (July-October, 2012): 417–25. On the soul in the larger framework of Avicenna's thought, see the eminently useful study of Robert Wisnowsky, *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 82–97, 133–40, but also passim (see general index).

44. Cf. the similar arguments in Muḥammad Saᶜīd Rayyān, *al-ᶜAql fil-Islām: Ru'ya Jadīda* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ḥaḍāra al-ᶜArabiyya, 2012).

5. Religion, Secularism, Ethics

1. *SA = Su'āl al-Akhlāq: Musāhama fil-Naqd al-Akhlāqī lil-Ḥadātha al-Gharbiyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ᶜArabī, 2000), 14: "*Fal-akhlāqiyya hiya al-aṣl al-ladhī tatafarraᶜ ᶜalayhi kull ṣifāt al-insān min ḥaythu huwa kadhālik.*" In line with Taha's concept of the continuousness (*waṣl*) of tradition, it is tempting to think of his definition of humanity as wholly constituted by ethics in terms of the "act of genesis," not in the simplistic sense of creation ex nihilo, but rather as one of linguistic ontology. In the Qur'ān, the premier authoritative and founding text for Taha and the entirety of Islamic traditions, the creative design of the world is unmistakably driven by, mapped out, and pervasively constructed as an act of justice. It is a design that structures the world, temporally and spatially, from beginning to end. It would seem to be the first and last will or (should one say) plan of God.

This intentionality of design begins with a narrative of origins where the entirety of creation is embedded, consciously and deliberately, within a plan of justice, this making creation a consequent of this plan and therefore predetermined by it. Which is to say, as many Muslim intellectuals said centuries ago, that God cannot be other than just (and that he would be acting against his own nature had he chosen to do otherwise), although one may recast the matter by

saying that God would not have interfered in a scene he could have easily forgotten about had he not wished to introduce to it a solution. God's intentional interference, simply put, foregrounds an ontology of ethics, but one, as I will argue, that is linguistic-ontological in its constitution. Needless to say, a solution by definition presupposes a problem, one that emerged in the historical process of creation living its life, and one that pertained exclusively to humans (*Banū Ādam*). It would seem at first glance as if the plan did not go as expected, thus requiring a correction. The narrative of the Great Fall, "Abrahamic" to a detail, appears as if it were a euphemistic treading over what might be construed as a mistake in the process of creation, and that mistake was the exclusive lot of humans (the Adamic era is here severely abridged and condensed into a historical topos or narrative-imaginary). Of course, it is integral to the attributes of God that he wills and does what he wants, and therefore a mistake can never be truly a mistake because he himself created the very thing called mistake. God the Omnipotent and Omniscient cannot fall into the very error that he himself created deliberately and on principle. The moment of the Fall thus becomes emblematic of a more complex evolutionary narrative ushering in an unprecedented consciousness that signaled the need—if not the indispensability—of installing a moral or "legal system of justice" within that self-conscious species.

The evolutionary narrative of correction need not stand as estranged or separable from the narrative of the Fall, for the two work together, dialectically and severally, in their appeal to the believing, or potentially believing, audience. For the ethically inclined beings—those whose quest in life is to cultivate moral existence—the empirical facts of the correction are of little concern, for what truly matters is not the always-illusive acquisition of historical knowledge, but the lesson that instructs in the ethical fashioning of mind and heart. A moral narrative or parable may be foregrounded rationally by no other virtue than its own ethical content. On the other hand, for those habituated in the determining weight of empirical knowledge, the linguistic rise of the conscience functions with the same power of conviction. The rise of the Word instantaneously signals the rise of the Law, that second divine attempt to bestow on humans a regulative plan that worked well with other species but failed so greatly in the case of *Homo sapiens* that a considerable and undeniable correction was called for. Thus when we deliberate over God being the Word that itself is the source of ontology in its entirety, what is being deliberated upon is the event of God appearing to humankind for the first time. It is then and there, whenever and wherever that may have been, that God comes to human attention and knowledge. For without humans in this world, no knowledge of God, or any god, could ever be possible.

But then how can a mistake, or even an indubitable cosmic plan of justice, be created between the originating moment of existential order and the linguistic end of that order. Used about a dozen times in the Qur'ān, the expression *kun fa-yakūn* (Be! And it is) emblematically marks this creative process, and at once ties together the domains of language, mind, and consciousness (Q. 2:117,

177; 3:47, 59; 6:73; 7:144; 15:98; 16:40; 19:35; 36:82; 40:68). For behind every animal, plant, or stone in the world there are these three words, *kun fa-yakūn*, the precipitators of all creation.

The common understanding of this imperative is that God's words are creative. All he needs to do is utter what he wills, thereby bringing into existence all that the uttered words encompass. But how can mere words, however divine their makeup may be, create complex phenomena that far transcend this linguistic simplicity? Does the divinely creative word bring about an ontological reality ex nihilo or is there another possibility to interpret God's initiative, interference in, or regulation of the human world? Why did God need to create the world in the first place, and why would he create a world in which one species, the human, would give him so much trouble that he needed to enact for it a series of epochal scriptural edicts that aim to correct that species' morality and sense of ethics? For after all God did not reveal such corrective Books unto birds, fish, or reptiles; and the Fall (for all of its mythical and ethical thrust) has been one exclusively reserved for humans. It would seem inescapable to integrate the quality of "falling" into the set of properties making up the quiddity of being a human (precisely where the import of Taha's definition of the human resides). In other words, one might well ask, is there a conceptual dissonance between the Word as a creative act and creation as a "becoming" in consciousness? Or is it the very occurrence of consciousness, when the power that is creation effectively translates into an intelligible, conscious mode of communicative explicandum?

Rejecting the doctrine claiming Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the distinguished exgete Ṭabarī, among others, comments at length on Q. 2:117's phrase "*kun fa-yakūn*." Declaring God the "creator of Earth and the Heavens," the verse goes on to state that "When He decrees a matter, He merely says to it: Be! And it is." Muḥammad b. Jarīr al- Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī al-Musammā Jāmiᶜ al-Bayān fī Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, 13 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ᶜIlmiyya, 2005), 1:555–59. What is at stake in this verse is that if God can be shown as able to create the world, then it is a priori that Jesus Christ can be created *without* a father. However, to reach this conclusion, several interpretive obstacles needed to be overcome, yet obstacles that prove instructive for our own concerns.

Some hypothetical interlocutors question the conditions under which such a command can make sense. If the thing is nonexistent, they argue, then it cannot be commanded to come into existence; "merely saying to it" would then not make any sense. A command *always* presupposes an object that can be a recipient of the command, for a command that has no locus or receptor is not a command at all. It is simply impossible (*muḥāl al-amr min āmir illā li-maʾmūr*). In other words, if the object or recipient of command (*maʾmūr*) is ontologically impossible, the command itself is rendered therewith impossible. The impossibility is demonstrative, just as it is patently certain that a command is impossible without a commander (*muḥāl al-amr min ghayr āmir*). The other possibility is that the thing commanded is itself already existent, in which case the creative order is redundant, if not meaningless, because it is logically impossible to bring something already in existence into existence. (Although Ṭabarī does

not use the technical term for this logical fallacy, it was generally called, before and after he wrote, *istiḥālat taḥṣīl al-ḥāṣil*; Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī al-Musammā Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, 13 vols. [Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005], 1:557.)

A third synthetic position seems to have been an attempt to resolve the logical fallacies that engulf such claims of creation. God, on this position, knows or conceives of all things in the world prior to their actual existence. They are mapped out, so to speak, in God's mind as forms of knowledge without taking any material form; and as such, they exist only in potentiality, but not in material existence (or, in terms of phenomenological reality, as actual constructions of the human mind). Accordingly, nonexistent things that exist in God's knowledge before their actual creation can be said to be "analogous" (*naẓāʾir*) to those things already in existence. And as being potentially capable of existing, they are susceptible to being commanded "into" existence, just as the other actually existing existents before them were subject to the same command. In other words, in one important sense, everything in the world already exists at one important level, namely, in the form of divine mental existence. (The Divine Plan of Justice is, incidentally, just an existent, like any other.) We can label this as nonsubstantive existence, whereas the actually created world would be material existence, even where materiality has to be extended to abstract values and attributes. Ṭabarī labels the difference in an equally, if not more tellingly, useful way. For him, the difference lies in the particular *state* in which things exist, namely, either in a state of existence (*wujūd*) or in one of nonexistence (*ʿadam*). But for him both states, in the final analysis, *exist* (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:557–58). In light of the phenomenological import of *kun fa-yakūn*, it is possible to argue for a phenomenological understanding of the meaning of existence as Ṭabarī and his *mufassirūn*-colleagues construed the terms of ʿadam and wujūd (existence and nonexistence). For Ṭabarī, God merely orders things to move from one state to another, or, as he says, "to exit" from the state of nonexistence into that of existence (*yaʾmuruhā bil-khurūj min ḥal al-ʿadam ilā ḥal al-wujūd*), it being assumed that the state of nonexistence is a state existing *in potentia*. This would be consistent with the argument, intimated earlier, that the creation of the world as humans know it is the "becoming" or emergence of consciousness, when the power euphemized in the story of creation is in effect no more than the "*appearance*" within human consciousness of what I just called a mode of communicative explicandum. The moment of transformation is therefore not creation ex nihilo, for that form of creation exists no more than other existents themselves do; and that moment does not, in actual effect, bring about things from nullity. Creation is thus an act in which things appear in reality; and since human reality is the only reality of which one can speak, this "appearance" can be little more than the becoming of consciousness. Which is also to say that the coming into (or of) consciousness, being a linguistic/conceptual act *strictu senso*, is *itself the act of creation that is concomitant with the rise of ethics*. It is no wonder then that Ṭabarī categorically declares that "words (*qawl*) and actual coming into existence (*kawn*) are one and the same thing" (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 1:559). Therefore, if this conception of genesis is deemed plausible (even to secularist-atheist

reason), then it would make Taha's argument—that "man" is an "ethical creature"—eminently, if not forcefully, defensible.

2. This position, a reaction to Aristotelian and Ghazālian intrusions, gained momentum after Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210), who seems to be the first, or one of the first, to articulate it within his systematic *kalāmic* philosophy. See Bilal Ibrahim, "The Forgotten Tradition of Reason: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and the Expansion of Islamic Philosophy and Theology" (unpublished ms.), 16. I am grateful to Bilal Ibrahim for generously sharing his work with me prior to publication.

3. *SA*, 14: "*Al-akhlāqiyya hiya mā bihi yakūn al-insān insān*" (but also see p. 147). On p. 14, he also notes: "*idh al-ʿaqlāniyya ʿalā qismayn kabīrayn, fa-hunāka al-ʿaqlāniyya al-mujarrada min 'al-akhlāqiyya,' wa-hādhihi yashtarik fī-hā al-insān maʿ al-ḥayawān, wa-hunāka al-ʿaqlāniyya al-musaddada al-akhlāqiyya, wa-hya al-latī yakhtaṣṣ bi-hā min dūni siwāh*." One would have expected Taha to pit enhanced reason (*ʿaqlāniyya muʾayyada*) against denuded reason, but from this statement I infer that enhanced reason is a subcategory, or a superior form, of guided reason.

4. Here Taha must be thinking of a type of contradictions and incoherences that differ from those that ensue from mundane ethical endeavor, for these latter can coexist with one another in the practices of daily life since their teleology and deontological substance are one and the same. Intellectual contradictions within systematic philosophical discourses are a different matter altogether. See chapter 4, section 2.

5. *SA*, 26: "*Fal-ḥadātha lā tuwallid illā qiyaman wa-maʿānī min jins waqāʾiʿihā wa-ẓawāhirihā*."

6. Questions that also preoccupy Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *The Mark of the Sacred*, trans. M. B. De Bevoise (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 109–16.

7. See Plato, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, trans. H. N. Fowler, Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1914), 3–59; T. J. Mawson, "The Euthyphro Dilemma," *Think* (Winter 2008): 25–33.

8. G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958): 1–19, at 1–2, 5; see also Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 55. Even if we allow for the argument that Kant deemed religious claims justifiable as knowledge claims—thus bestowing on them a cognitive status—such an argument nonetheless underscores "more clearly the different epistemic character of juridical principles and religious claims," this being a marked secularist differential. See Sorin Baiasu, "Kant's Critique of Religion: Epistemic Sources of Secularism," *Diametros* 54 (2017): 7–29, at 27.

9. On secularism as a recycled form of Christianity, see Gil Anidjar, "Secularism," *Critical Inquiry* 1 (Autumn 2006): 52–77.

10. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning Into Moral Subjects; and Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, 1898), 3.1.1 (pp. 245–46): "In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning

human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it . . . [I] am persuaded, that a small attention [to this point] wou'd subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceiv'd by reason."

11. I have analyzed this centrality in terms of paradigms, arguing that a certain concept of reason or rationality has acquired in modernity a central domain, creating and affecting all peripheral domains. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 6–12. While Taha correctly identifies the central forces of modernity, he shies away from casting them in terms of domains and paradigms, because perhaps he insists on the distinction between the spirit and applications of modernity. In the theory of paradigms I construct on the basis of Carl Schmitt, Kuhn, and Foucault, I do not draw the same sharp boundaries between spirit and application, for on my view there is a dialectical relationship between so-called spirit and application, hence the difficulty in creating neat boundaries between the two.

12. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 3.1.1 (pp. 245–46).

13. See chapter 6, note 8.

14. On the question of Hobbes's influence on Mandeville, see James Dean Young, "Mandeville: A Popularizer of Hobbes," *Modern Language Notes* 74, no. 1 (1959): 10–13.

15. Charles Taylor, "Justice After Virtue," in *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. John Horton and Susan Mendus (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), 20; MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 56–61, 79–87; MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1998), 130–31, 166–71, 189–91. See also John R. Searle, "How to Derive 'Ought' From 'Is,'" *Philosophical Review* 73, no. 1 (January 1964): 43–58; and Raymond Geuss, *Morality, Culture, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 170, for Nietzsche's similar attitude to the distinction between Is and Ought.

16. Taylor, "Justice After Virtue," 20.

17. Taylor, 20–21.

18. On "genetic slice" as an epistemic method, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 9, 153, 224, 316n34.

19. See, for instance, Robert G. Morrison, *Islam and Science: The Intellectual Career of Nizam al-Din al-Nisaburi* (London: Routledge, 2007).

20. The literature on colonizing space, both popular and academic, is abundant. An example of the feasibility of colonization may be found in a lengthy study conducted by nineteen scientists and sponsored by NASA and Stanford University.

See Richard D. Johnson and Charles Holbrow, eds., "Space Settlements: A Design Study," https://trove.nla.gov.au/work/11517358?selectedversion=NBD1082782.

21. This being consistent with my argument in the epilogue with respect to techniques/technologies as pliable and even mutable.

22. Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Random House, 2003), 350, 357.

23. *SA*, 54: *"Al-akhlāq laysat kamalāt, bi-maʿnā ziyādāt lā ḍarara ʿalā al-huwiyya al-insāniyya fī tarkihā, wa-innamā hiya ḍarūrāt lā taqūm hādhihi al-huwiyya bi-dūnihā, bi-ḥaythu idhā fuqidat hādhihi al-ḍarūrāt fuqidat al-huwiyya."*

24. Taha does not provide an example to illustrate this claim, but one can conjecture that the very same amount of charitable donation possesses various levels of meaning when given to a political party, to an art museum, or to an impoverished peasant family in a poor country. It also matters much *who* gives the donation—a peasant, a billionaire.

25. In the specific context of this discourse, *ḥaḍāra* may also be readily translated as "culture." Thus, *ḥaḍārat qawl/ḥaḍārat fiʿl* may be rendered as "culture of speech/culture of praxis" (or "of deed").

26. On procedure and procedural technique, see chapter 3, section 2 (Globalization), and note 47 therein.

27. I have pursued the issue of sovereignty over the future in Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 199–202.

28. Max Scheler, *Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Manfred Frings (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 28.

29. For my reservations about the categorical claim to "linguistic performativity," see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 61–64.

30. A prominent example in point is the fabrication of the distinction between Is and Ought, and between Fact and Value, which becomes, with Hume (mid-eighteenth century), an ennobled and dominant philosophical distinction whose "practical" and material manifestations began to appear on the scene in the late sixteenth century, if not earlier. See Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 84–88.

31. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1976), 139–47. Arendt remarks that "Hobbes's deep distrust of the whole Western tradition of political thought will not surprise us if we remember that he wanted nothing more nor less than the justification of Tyranny which, though it has occurred many times in Western history, has never been honored with a philosophical foundation" (144). It is arguable, however, that J. S. Mill, like Kant before him, cannot be reduced to what we have come to call a "classical liberal" affiliation, and that his philosophy allowed for extraliberal components that seem to have been suppressed in the interpretation of later liberal tradition. See Giorgios Varouxakis, *Liberty Abroad: J. S. Mill on International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). What is more significant than what a philosopher "truly" upheld in terms of ideas or doctrines is how he or she is canonized, and what the philosopher is paradigmatically made to stand for.

32. M. Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. P. Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1994), 223–51, at 224–26.

33. Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

34. Although Jonas scholars do not seem to agree on the extent to which his concept of responsibility is grounded in fear. See Roberto Franzini Tibaldeo, "The Heuristics of Fear: Can the Ambivalence of Fear Teach Us Anything in the Technological Age?," *Ethics of Progress* 6, no. 1 (2015): 225–38, at 230n10.

35. Tibaldeo, 230.

36. Further on this, see Damien Bazin, "A Reading of the Conception of Man in Hans Jonas' Works: Between Nature and Responsibility, an Environmental Ethics Approach," *Éthique et économique/Ethics and Economics* 2, no. 2 (2004): 1–17; Eric Pommier, "Life and Anthropology: A Discussion Between Kantian Criticism and Jonasian Ontology," *Giornale Critico di Storia delle Idee* 14 (2015): 123–36.

37. *SA*, 125: "*Addā bihi* [Jonas] *ilā al-wuqūʿ fī ḍaḥālat al-idrāk li-maʿnā al-mas'ūliyya.*"

38. See, for instance, Karl-Otto Apel, "How to Ground a Universalistic Ethics of Co-Responsibility for the Effects of Collective Actions and Activities?," *Philosophica* 52, no. 2 (1993): 9–29.

39. For a critique of Habermas's theory, see *RD*, 152–75.

40. In Uṣūl al-Fiqh and all juridical discourse, knowledge (*ʿilm*) is graded in terms of certainty and probability, the only two categories that can engender validity in propositions. Thus, a *ẓannī* proposition is probably true, which is to say that it is more likely to be true than not. This probability is graded in terms of strength since some propositions are likely to be truer than other probably true propositions. There is then a series of designations that describe this gradation, ranging from mere *ẓann* (probability), to *ghālib al-ẓann* (strong probability = *al-ẓann al-ghālib* = *al-ẓann al-qawī*), to *al-ẓann al-mutākhim lil-yaqīn*, a degree of probability that is "adjacent to certainty." *Yaqīn* is certainty, obviously neither divisible nor graded.

41. *SA*, 130: "*Li-taʿadhdhur ijtimāʿ al-siyāda ʿalā al-ṭabīʿa maʿ al-ʿamal bi-hādhihi al-akhlāq.*"

42. *SA*, 145–46: "*Akhlāq al-saṭḥ lā tanfaʿ fil-khurūj min āfāt al-ʿumq.*"

43. For an elaboration of the concept of the new human, see epilogue.

44. For a useful account of *niyya*, see Paul R. Powers, *Intent in Islamic Law: Motive and Meaning in Medieval Sunnī Fiqh* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

45. Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī al-Kabīr*, ed. ʿAlī Muʿawwaḍ and ʿĀdil ʿAbd al-Mawjūd, 18 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1994), 1:87–92; Powers, *Intent*, 32–33; Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 120–22, 133–34, 217.

46. ʿAlī al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Faqīh wal-Mutafaqqih*, ed. Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and ʿĀdil al-ʿAzāzī, 2 vols. (Jedda: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1996), 1:26ff.; Māwardī, *dab al-Dīn wal-Dunyā* (Jedda: Dār al-Minhāj, 2013), 119ff.

47. See Megan Reid, *Law and Piety in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 13–20.

48. On "genetic slices" as epistemological categories, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 9, 153, 224, 316n34. On the successful psychopath, see 192–94.

49. Elsewhere, he directly addresses the concept of negative liberty in the context of pluralism. See Taha, *Taʿaddudiyat al-Qiyam: Mā Madāha? Wa-mā Ḥudūduhā?* (Marrakech: al-Maṭbaʿa wal-Wirāqa al-Waṭaniyya, 2001), 19 and passim.

50. As I will show in the epilogue, Taha's concept of positive liberty does not tally with the Berlinian one, since it is not subject to state interference. The qualification "individuated" constitutes the difference, and points to the individual as the autonomous agent in the exercise of positive freedom.

51. In *Restating Orientalism*, I reject this interpretation, ascribing to Foucault a theory of exit, at least in principle. In principle, because Foucault's project was clearly not about finding solutions but rather was one centered on diagnosing problems. One may even be tempted to say that Foucault was not equipped, because of the assumptions in which he grounded himself, to offer effective or meaningful solutions.

52. See note 50, and epilogue.

6. Sovereignty, Ethical Management, and Trusteeship

1. *RD = Rūḥ al-Dīn: Min Ḍīq al-ʿAlmāniyya ilā Siʿat al-Iʾtimāniyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2012).

2. For an incisive critique, see Gil Anidjar, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Christianity," *Interventions* 11, no. 3 (2009): 367–93.

3. *RD*, 510: "*Al-rūḥ amrun khafiy min warā' al-nafs, yuzʿijuhā ilā al-khayr, wa-yaṣilu ṣāḥibuhā bil-ʿālam al-ghaybiy matā dakhala fī ʿamāli al-tazkiya wa-ḥifẓi ḥuqūqi al-amānāt.*" For a definition of "*yuzʿij/izʿāj*" (here roughly translated as "agitate" or "disturb"), see *RD*, 511, and section 6 of this chapter.

4. Note the similarities between Taha's views here and those of the distinguished Ṣūfīs Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Riyāḍat al-Nafs*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2005); Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-Farq Bayna al-Ṣadr wal-Qalb wal-Fu'ād wal-Lubb*, ed. Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Sāyiḥ (Cairo: Markaz al-Kitāb lil-Nashr, n.d.), esp. at 33–34; and Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū Bakr Ibn ʿArabī, *al-Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya fī Iṣlāḥ al-Mamlaka al-Insāniyya*, ed. ʿĀṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003), 10, 26, 34–36. However, Taha seems less inclined than, for instance, Ibn ʿArabī, to credit the *nafs* with the ability to procure ethical effects and goodness.

5. *AD*, 51: "*Al-insān muzdawij al-wujūd iḍṭirāran lā ikhtiyāran.*"

6. *AD*, 28–31. For his definition of "man" as ethical, not rational, see chapter 5, section 1. Further on horizontality and verticality, see Muḥammad Saʿīd Rayyān, *al-ʿAql fil-Islām: Ru'ya Jadīda* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ḥaḍāra al-ʿArabiyya, 2012), 9–11.

7. *Rāziq* is used here in reference to one of God's names, *al-Razzāq*, He who bestows material and other benefits on humans.

8. *Fiṭra* meant several things, depending on the context. At a basic level, it is an inborn original disposition through which humans perceive things in the world. Intelligence and stupidity, and anything in between, are attributes determined by *fiṭra*, which is to say that *fiṭra* is relative, with some people having a sharper "disposition" than others. For Fārābī as well as for Ghazālī, as Griffel tells us, it also meant—at this level—a natural ability or talent. For Ibn Sīnā, *fiṭra* is a judgment or proposition that all human beings possess in common, and are able to

form irrespective of their education or upbringing. Thus, *fiṭra* is "distinct from the rational capacity to derive theoretical knowledge from earlier [judgments/propositions] by the use of arguments." It is thus "a stock of judgments that are considered primary. . . . Therefore, the true judgments of the *fiṭra* enable the individual to develop accurate knowledge about the world. For al-Ghazālī as well as Avicenna such knowledge remains descriptive [but] once the human reaches into the field of moral judgments he or she has left the ground of truth that the judgments of the *fiṭra* help to build. This is where Islam comes in, because, according to Ghazālī, true moral judgments can only come from revelation." Yet, Ghazālī seems to have believed that "judgments of the *fiṭra* contain knowledge of God's existence." See Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī's Use of 'Original Human Disposition' (*Fiṭra*) and Its Background in the Teachings of Fārābī and Avicenna," *Muslim World* 102 (January 2012): 1–32; quotes are from pp. 28 and 30. See also Hallaq, "Ibn Taymiyya on the Existence of God," *Acta Orientalia* 52 (1991): 49–69, and Rayyān, *al-ʿAql fil-Islām*, 128–33.

9. For a discussion of the concept of individuated positive liberty, see epilogue.

10. My characterization, not Taha's. See Michael Waltzer, "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1973): 160–80.

11. See Peter Lassman, "The Rule of Man Over Man: Power, Politics, and Legitimation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 83–98; Murray Bookchin, *Remaking Society: Pathways to a Green Future* (Boston: South End, 1990), 44–46.

12. Taha here cites Yves Ledure, *Conscience religieuse et pouvoir politique* (Paris: Éditions le Centurion, 1979), 127–28. For a similar account, see Paul Kahn, *Out of Eden: Adam and Eve and the Problem of Evil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

13. *RD*, 139: "*Fal-ʿalāqa al-siyāsiyya lā yumkin an takūn, fī aṣlihā, illā ʿalāqa tanāzuʿiyya, fa-tūjad al-siyāsa ḥaythu tūjad al-munāzaʿa, wa-tanʿadim al-siyāsa ḥaythu tanʿadim al-munāzaʿa.*"

14. See, inter alia, Mouffe, *On the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

15. *RD*, 183: "*Taḍyīq al-wujūd al-insānī . . . huwa al-āfa al-kubrā allatī tashtarik fīhā kull ashkāl al-ʿalmāniyya.*" The term *āfa* literally means incapacity due to disease. See Majd al-Dīn Ibn Yaʿqūb al-Fayrūzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 1998), 794: "*Al-āfa [hiya] al-ʿāha aw ʿaraḍun mufsidun li-mā aṣābahu.*"

16. Incidentally, even in its present brevity, this "original position" constitutes, I think, a decisive refutation of critiques directed at my *The Impossible State* as a work that is purported to "idealize history" (Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2013]). For these critiques to acquire intellectual legitimacy, they must first reckon with the pervasive and *structural* presence of this epistemological problem in their foundational premises.

17. *RD*, 188: "*Fa-limā lā yajūz an yakūn al-ʿamal al-rūḥī maḥkūman bi-qānūn al-tarākum ka-mā yaḥkum taṭawwur al-ʿamal al-ʿilmī, bi-ḥaythu tatazāyad al-maʿrifa bi-asrārih ka-mā tatazāyad al-maʿrifa bi-qawānīn al-ʿilm! Wa-matā sallamnā bi-mabdaʾ al-tarākum hādhā.*"

18. See Amy Allen, *End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, 14–17; Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 34, 125–26, 150–55, 209, 214–15, and passim.

19. Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*.

20. For a discussion of the moral technologies of the self in the works of these two thinkers, see Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 110ff.

21. Taha, *Rūḥ al-Ḥadātha: al-Madkhal ilā Taʾsīs al-Ḥadātha al-Islāmiyya* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2006), 193: "*Qabla al-ḥadātha . . . huwa zaman al-wuqūʾ taḥta al-wiṣāya al-ladhī thārat ʿalayhi bil-dhāt al-ḥadātha*."

22. See Taha's discussion of the Qurʾān in chapter 3.

23. RD, 190: "*Aḥaduhumā anna waḍʿa al-dhāt lil-qawānīn huwa al-tajallī al-awwal li-irādat al-tasayyud; wal-thānī anna irādat Allāh tataʿāraḍ maʿ irādat al-muwāṭin*." On *muwāṭana* as the ethical association of individuals within a "political" framework, see ʿAbd al-Salām Būzibra, *Ṭāha ʿAbd al-Raḥmān wa-Naqd al-Ḥadātha* (Beirut: Jadawel, 2011), 234–37. In this specific context, I use "denizen," not "citizen," because the political implications of Taha's writings on citizenship as a fairly well-defined political concept (namely, as an ideological product of the nation-state) are ambiguous. The term *denizen* as mere "inhabitant or occupant of a particular place" is pliable, allowing for a range of meanings that seem to accommodate the ambiguity. However, see note 28 for a less ambiguous, and therefore more problematic, use of the concept.

24. This is the thrust of Anscombe's critique of Kant's moral law and the Categorical Imperative. See G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958): 1–19, at 1–2, 5.

25. *RD*, 192: "*Baʿda an qarrarū ʿalā wajh al-taḥakkum biʾanna al-awwal [huwa] majāl al-taʿabbud wa-anna al-thāni[yya] majal al-tadbīr al-ʿāmm*."

26. See, for instance, John W. Cairns, "Watson, Walton, and the History of Legal Transplants," *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law* 41, no. 3 (2013): 637–96.

27. I have dealt with certain aspects of this problem in terms of a theory of evil and hate of the self. See Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 51, 89–90, 227–28.

28. Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, ed. ʿĀmir Aḥmad Ḥaydar and ʿAbd al-Munʿim Ibrāhīm, 15 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2009), 13:557: "*Al-waṭan [huwa] al-manzil, tuqīmu fīh . . . huwa mawṭin al-insān wa-maḥalluhu*" (under *W.Ṭ.N.*). See note 23.

29. See Goodman's passage in the main text at note 31.

30. Ibn Ṭufayl having been a patron of the young Averroes in the caliphal court, who is said to have encouraged the latter to put his energies into the study of the Aristotelian corpus. See Lenn Evan Goodman, *Ibn Ṭufayl's Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān: A Philosophical Tale* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 4–5.

31. Goodman, *Ibn Ṭufayl's Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān*, 17–18 (emphasis mine).

32. Since in Islam, India, and China the "rise" of science did not generate the kinds of reactions that it did in Catholic Europe.

33. RD, 203: "*[Huwa] al-aṣl bil-iḍāfa ilā bāqī al-ḥudūd*."

34. RD, 224: "*Al-maṣāliḥ al-latī yurāʿīhā hādhā al-tadbīr al-dākhilī lā taqif ʿinda al-maṣāliḥ al-akhlāqiyya, bal tataʿaddāhā ilā al-maṣāliḥ al-rūḥiyya.*"

35. RD, 236: "*Ḥattā annahu yajūz al-qawl bi-anna kull niẓām siyāsī huwa, bil-quwwa, niẓām muḥīṭ.*" Taha is here using "*quwwa*" in the classical philosophical sense, to stand as an antonym of "bil-fiʿl" (in actuality). See Wael Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 80.

36. *RD*, 236: "*Wa-kull niẓām siyāsī qāʾim, in bil-quwwa aw bil-fiʿl, ʿalā tasayyud ghayr mutanāhī.*" See also p. 239. Further on this theme, see Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), and Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, chap. 4.

37. *RD*, 254: "*Al-tasayyus wal-tasayyud fiʿlān mutalāzimān; fa-lā tasayyud bi-ghayri tasayyus, wa-lā tasayyus bi-ghayri tasayyud.*"

38. I am not sure I understand this qualification, since, if we go by Mauss, for instance, "thinking," as the habitus of the "rational modern subject," does manifest itself in a particular way of carrying the self, of behaving in and seeing the world. See Marcel Mauss, "The Notion of Body Techniques," in *Sociology and Psychology: Essays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 97–123. Also available as "Techniques of the Body," https://monoskop.org/images/c/c4/Mauss_Marcel _1935_1973_Techniques_of_the_Body.pdf.

39. In a related point (*RD*, 272), Taha argues that the sovereign, by virtue of having been consumed by his condition as sovereign, can no longer possess the internal means or autonomy to liberate himself from this condition. Yet, he continues, liberating himself from this servitude, the sovereign is required to "go out of his self" in order to seek the ethical techniques of practice (i.e., worship). The question that poses itself here is, is this possible in the first place, unless the "external means" possess capacities that are commensurately external to the self?

40. *RD*, 272–73: "*Wa-kamāl al-iṭlāq fil-dhāt al-ilāhiyya yastalzim kamāl al-ḥurriyya fil-dhāt al-insāniyya, dhālika anna al-taʿalluq bil-muṭlaq al-kāmil huwa taʿalluq bi-man lā yaḥudduhu shayʾ, wa-lā yuʿjizuhu shayʾ, . . . Wa-muḥāl an takūna kalimāt Allāh al-sābiqa wa-tashrīʿātahu al-lāḥiqa al-munazzala ilā ʿibādihi . . . athqālan ʿalā ẓuhūrihim tunhiku qudrātahum wa-lā aghlālan fī aʿnāqihim tunhiku ḥurriyatahum, wa-innamā, ʿalā al-ʿaksi min dhālika, jaʿalahā la-hum aṣlaḥa al-wasāʾil al-latī tūṣiluhum ilā taḥrīr anfusihim min anfusihim, faḍlan ʿan taḥrīrihā min ghayrihim.*"

41. *RD*, 273–74. My interpretation of these pages is in fact summed up in a new section on the next page, 275: "*Ḥubb al-īmān al-ḥaṣil bil-tazkiya yaqdir ʿalā an yaṭrud ḥubb al-sulṭān min qalb al-fard.*"

42. The concept of *ḥayāʾ* is one of the cornerstones of Taha's project, culminating in the publication of his three-volume work *Dīn al-Ḥayāʾ: Min al-Fiqh al-Iʾtimārī ilā al-Fiqh al-Iʾtimānī*, 3 vols. (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Fikr wal-Ibdāʿ, 2017). The concept, however, emerges as central earlier on, being interconnected with a range of important philosophical moments, such as that of its relationship to dialogue (*ḥiwār*) between "nations" (*umam*). See Taha, *al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī fil-Ikhtilāf al-Fikrī* (Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2005), 153–58. On *waqāḥa* as an antonym of *ḥayāʾ*, see p. 153.

43. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 14:269, under "*ḥayā*'": "*Al-ḥayā' [huwa] al-tawba wal-ḥishma*." See ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *al-Taʿrīfāt*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Marʿashlī (Beirut: Dār al-Nafāʾis, 2007), 158: "*Al-ḥayā' inqibāḍ al-nafs min shay' wa-tarkuhu ḥadharan ʿan al-lawm fī-hi*."

44. *RD*, 279, 284: "*Fa-lā khilāfa bi-lā taʿabbud*."

45. Taha has recently dedicated an entire book to a treatment of violence, titled *Suʾal al-ʿUnf: Bayna al-Iʾtimaniyya wal-Ḥiwāriyya* (Beirut: al-Muʾassasa al-ʿArabiyya lil-Fikr wal-Ibdāʿ, 2017).

46. See Paul Kahn, *Putting Liberalism in Its Place* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 268–69; Gianfranco Poggi, *The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978), 90; Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 25–28.

47. Discussed in chapter 5, section 4.

48. *RD*, 303: "*Fa-qad tarādafa ʿalayhi alwān min al-istiʿbād al-khafī wal-akhfā, bad'an bi-ʿibādat al-dhāt wa-intihā'an bil-tabaʿiyya lil-sūq*."

49. *RD*, 303–4: "*Ḥattā aṣbaḥa huwa al-insān al-ladhī yataṭawwaʿ bi-ʿubūdiyyatihi, mutawahhiman anna hādhā al-taṭuwwuʿ yajʿaluhu yatamattaʿ bi-aqṣā ḥurriyatihi*."

50. See Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (London: Verso, 2014), 232–72.

51. Althusser, 232–72; Pierre Bourdieu, "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field," in *State/Culture: State Formation After the Cultural Turn*, ed. George Steinmetz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999): 53–75.

52. *RD*, 304–5: "*Wal-mujtamaʿ bi-ghayri mumārasatin izʿājiyya ka-lā mujtamaʿ. . . . Fa-qad yūjad al-insān bi-dūni ḥukūmatin wa-lā tasayyudin siyāsī, wa-lākinnahu lā yūjad bi-dūni usratin aw muḥīṭin insānī*." See also p. 306. In *Rūḥ al-Ḥadātha* (99–139, especially at 100, 110–11), Taha argues that the family is not just the site of social and legal relations; it also plays a central function in the production of ethics and human and humane values. It is, so it appears, the immediate and most auspicious context in which the individual can self-operate on his soul, what I have called, on behalf of Taha, the technologies of the soul.

53. *RD*, 305: Disturbance "*huwa al-taṣaddī lil-asfal wa-iktisāḥ mawqiʿ al-mujtamaʿ*."

54. This echoes the premodern Islamic discourse on what has come to be known as "working for the government." See the treatise published by Wilferd Madelung, "A Treatise of the Sharīf al-Murtaḍā on the Legality of Working for the Government (*Masʾala Fī 'l-ʿAmal Maʿa 'l-Sulṭān*)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 43, no. 1 (1980): 18–31.

55. "Hypothetical" in the sense that the identity of the interlocutor is not identified. As in the case of premodern Islamic literature, behind this hypothetical interlocutor there often stood an actual one (e.g., a *fatwā* seeker or a dialectical disputant [*munāẓir*] in a scholarly debate), and the same may be Taha's case with his intellectual surrounds.

56. For an expansive treatment of *jihād*, see Taha, *al-Ḥaqq al-Islāmī*, 217–73, and Taha, *Suʾāl al-ʿUnf*.

57. *RD*, 312: "*Inna al-izʿāja huwa nafsuhu jihād, bal al-aṣl fil-jihād an yaḥṣul bi-ṭarīq al-izʿāj, fa-yalzam anna al-jihād bil-quwwa innamā huwa jihād farʿī, bi-ḥaythu takūn*"

rutbat al-jihād bil-izʿāj ashraf min rutbatihi, wal-iʿdād la-hu awjab wa-akbar min al-iʿdād lil-jihād bil-quwwa."

58. On the distinction between these forms of rationality, see chapter 4.

59. On the defensive nature of *jihād*, see Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 94–95.

60. A dimension of this debate-cum-communication theory is also articulated in his *Taʿaddudiyat al-Qiyam*, where he categorically rejects the doctrine of the "clash of civilizations" and "conflicting values" in favor of dialogue and debate between and among people, communities, and "nations." This dialogue, integral to his theory of *ḥiwār*, is based on the concept of *taṣāduf al-qiyam* (concurrence of values), not *taṣādum al-qiyam* (oppositional, conflicting values), the Huntingtonian idea that led to what is now a political doctrine of the "clash of civilizations." Yet, judging from the short shrift that Taha gives to Huntington, it appears that Taha does not take Huntington's work to be worthy of rebuttal. Instead, he focuses on the philosophical genealogy of the problem, identifying—as we have seen him do in this chapter—love of power and domination, secularism, and the liberal concept of education as responsible for nurturing this aggressive Huntingtonian notion. His forceful critique is instead directed at six major political thinkers, namely, Max Weber, Isaiah Berlin, Jürgen Habermas, Karl-Otto Apel, John Rawls, and Michael Walzer. See Taha, *Taʿaddudiyat al-Qiyam: Mā Madāha? Wa-mā Ḥudūduhā?* (Marrakech: al-Maṭbaʿa wal-Wirāqa al-Waṭaniyya, 2001), 5–52, esp. at 47–52.

61. *RD*, 337: "*Siyāsa*," Ibn Qayyim states, "[t]*anqasim ilā qismayn: saḥīḥ wa-fāsid, fal-ṣaḥīḥ qism min aqsām al-Sharīʿa lā qasīma la-hā, wal-bāṭil ḍidduhā wa-munāfīhāʾ*." Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn ʿan Rabb al-ʿĀlamīn*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1998), 4:500. See also to similar effect Ibn Qayyim, *al-Ṭuruq al-Ḥukmiyya fil-Siyāsa al-Sharʿiyya*, ed. Muḥammad al-Zuḥaylī and Bashīr Muḥammad ʿUyūn (Beirut: Maktabat al-Muʾayyad, 1989), 4. This slogan comes on the heels of another, earlier distinction between the sacred and profane. Here Taha goes far back to the premodern Islamic sources in order to object to the slogan that "Islam is both a religion and worldly [in its concerns]" ("*al-Islām dīn wa-dunyā*"; *RD*, 344). While this clearly is a modern formulation, it is not as clear that it was used, in the same sense, by any premodern jurist or theologian. The fact that Māwardī, here cited by Taha, has two books bearing the language of *dīn* and *dunyā* as well as *sulṭān* and *dīn* (in his famous *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya wal-Wilāyāt al-Dīniyya*) is no evidence that the meaning of the modern slogan existed during Māwardī's eleventh century. When read carefully, and in conjunction with *Tashīl al-Naẓar wa-Taʿjīl al-Ẓafar* (also by Māwardī), the *dunyā/dawla* spheres are seen as Sharīʿa-regulated, only needing the enforcement of the sultanic power (whose function is *tathbīt qawāʿid al-dīn*). As Ibn al-Qayyim has just noted, *siyāsa* is integral to the Sharīʿa, but both undoubtedly need the enforcement of the sultan who is under the same mandate of observance and obedience as any other Muslim, if not more.

62. *RD*, 353: "*Wa-innamā taʿnī, ʿalā al-akhaṣṣ, al-ijtihād al-basharī al-ladhī yaḥṣul fī istiqlāl ʿan sulṭat al-naṣṣ al-dīnī, fī ḥīn yushtaraṭ fil-ijtihād al-basharī li-bināʾ dawlat al-Islām an yabqā mawṣūlan, bal muqayyadan bil-waḥy al-ilāhī*."

63. Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 154–55. On this issue at large and for the metaphysical implications of syllogism and the theory of universals on which it rests, see Hallaq, *Ibn Taymiyya Against the Greek Logicians.*

64. Hallaq, *Impossible State*, 62–65. See also note 61.

65. For a history of this process of destruction, or "demolish and replace," see Hallaq, *Sharīʿa: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), part 3.

66. Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 116–17, 174.

67. See chapter 4, section 3, at paragraph ending with note 22.

68. On the pre-Mawdūdian origins of the distinctly modern concept of *ḥākimiyya*, see the insightful article of Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "The Sovereignty of God in Modern Islamic Thought," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25, no. 3 (2015): 389–418. On debates within the Islamist camps about Sayyid Quṭb's concept of *ḥākimiyya*, see ʿAbd al-Ghanī ʿImād, "Fī Naqd Uṭrūḥat al-Ḥākimiyya al-Ilāhiyya," in *Al-Thāqafa al-ʿArabiyya fil-Qarn al-ʿIshrīn: Ḥaṣīla Awwaliyya*, ed. Bilqazīz and Muḥammad Jamāl Bārūt (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥda al-ʿArabiyya, 2011), 167–79.

69. I have argued for this conceptual link in Hallaq, "Groundwork of the Moral Law: A New Look at the Qurʾān and the Genesis of Sharīʿa," *Islamic Law and Society* 16, nos. 3–4 (2009): 239–279; and Hallaq, "Qurʾānic Constitutionalism and Moral Governmentality: Further Notes on the Founding Principles of Islamic Society and Polity," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 8, nos. 1–2 (2012): 1–51.

70. *RD*, 368: "*Awāmiruhu al-qudsiyya la tanfakk an tatawārad min ghayr inqiṭāʿ ḥifẓan li-ḥayāti [al-insān] fī kulli laḥẓa min laḥaẓatihā.*" This view derives from a theological position adopted by many Muslim scholars, including jurists. See Harry Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 544–51; Wael Hallaq, "On the Authoritativeness of Sunni Consensus," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18, no. 4 (November 1986): 427–54, at 437–39, 443.

71. *RD*, 369 (and note 23 therein): "*Fal-āmiriyya al-ilāhiyya hiya al-aṣl al-awwal al-ladhī yuraddu ilayhi kullu shayʾ.*"

72. *RD*, 400: "*Wa-law anna ʾal-taḥkīmiyyīn' taʿāṭū lil-ʿamal al-tazkawī ʿalā shurūṭihi, la-istaṭāʿū an yubdiʿū ṭarīqan fil-siyāsa lā yarā fī-hi khuṣūmuhum khaṭaran yuhaddid sulṭānahum, li-annahu lan yakūna muṭlaqan min jinsi ʿamalihim.*"

73. *RD*, 401n1, citing Tālqānī, Sharīʿat Madārī, Khūʾī, Sīstānī, Muḥammad Jawād Mughanniyya, and even Muntaẓarī, who initially supported it.

74. See Aḥmad al-Narāqī, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, ed. Yāsīn al-Mūsawī (Beirut: Dār al-Taʿāruf lil-Maṭbūʿāt, n.d.).

75. *RD*, 449: "*Yatakawwan min ʿunṣurayn asāsiyayn humā: al-ikhtiyār al-awwal wa-taḥammul al-amāna.*" On Taha's concept of trusteeship within an analysis of European Islam, see Mohammed Hashas, *The Idea of European Islam: Religion, Ethics, Politics and Perpetual Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2019), 186–204.

76. *RD*, 449: "*Idhan tuʿaddu . . . alfāẓan mutarādifa, idh tufīdu kulluhā anna al-insāna taḥammala ḥifẓa al-aḥkāmi al-ilāhiyya, lā fī ẓāhirihā ka-awāmir fa-ḥasb bal ayḍan fī bāṭinihā ka-shawāhid.*"

77. *RD*, 453: "*Yastalzim taḥṣīl al-shuʿūr bil-masʾūliyya.*"

78. *RD*, 474: "*Fa-qad ḥaqqa lil-mūdaʿ ladayhi an yatamallak mā awdaʿahu al-mūdiʿ al-ilāhī wa-an yastakmil bi-hi taḥqīq dhātihi, mutaṣarrifan fī-hi bi-ḥasab maṣāliḥihi, ʿalā an yurāʿī ḥuqūq al-mūdiʿ al-ilāhī fī kulli wadāʾiʿihi.*"

79. For an elaboration on the theme of gratitude in a similar context, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 249–58.

Epilogue

1. Taha, *Al-Ḥiwār Ufuqan lil-Fikr* (Beirut: al-Shabaka al-ʿArabiyya lil-Abḥāth wal-Nashr, 2013), 7–9.

2. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 166–217. See also John N. Gray, "On Negative and Positive Liberty," *Political Studies* 28, no. 4 (1980): 507–26.

3. René Guénon*, East and West*, trans. Martin Lings (Ghent, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2001), 24–25, 43, 69–70.

4. On subversiveness and the author in this context, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 138–78, but also passim.

5. Charles Taylor, *Malaise of Modernity* (Concord, Ontario: Anansi, 1991).

6. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 6–7, 142–45.

7. Latour, 13–15, 142.

8. Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 246–49.

9. In addition to Taha's diagnostic of these crises throughout the chapters of this book, see my synthetic account in Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 232–33.

10. See next note.

11. As generally characterized by Robert Boyle, said by Latour to be (along with Hobbes in politics) the architect of modern science's representation. See Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 15–20, 27–29; Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 77. It must also be said that no contradiction ensues in positing that the human body is at once "endowed with the highest value" and conceived as part of a "brute" nature. The focus on the body, not on the self, as the site of care is precisely because it is treated as amenable to control and manipulation, both of which are processes intended to invest the body as matter with a particular value.

12. This sentence deliberately invokes the Network-Actor Theory.

13. Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*.

14. M. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al., vol. 3 (New York: New Press, 1994), 336.

15. On gratitude and the liberal dilemmas in dealing with it, see Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 249–58.

16. Needless to say, this "outline" awaits further and extensive deliberations on the meaning of critique and resistance.

17. The Tahan meanings of *Ḥayā'* and my derivative concept of humility are not to be equated or in any manner associated with the Nietzschean notions of humility as "slave morality." Nietzsche thought that by "enshrining the 'slave morality,' the weak are doing exactly what the strong do: they are aiming at eminence and superiority." On Nietzsche's problematic interpretation of Christian morality, see, for instance, Robert Elliot, "Humility and Magnanimity in Nietzsche and Christianity," *Ethika Politika* (May 29, 2014), https://ethikapolitika.org/2014/05/29/humility-magnanimity-nietzsche-christianity. I owe the caution against the reader's possible understanding of humility in a Nietzschean fashion to my colleague Akeel Bilgrami.

18. In reference to my discussion of the concept of gratitude in *Restating Orientalism*, 249–58.

19. Elisabeth Anker, "The Liberalism of Horror," *Social Research* 81, no. 4 (Winter 2104): 795–823; Dominico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2011); Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 249–58, and sources cited therein.

20. Qur'ān, 5:48: "*Li-kullin jaʿalnā min-kum shirʿatan wa-minhājā*": "Had God willed, He would have made you one nation/community." See also Q. 49:13. Of course, the use here of "nation" is metaphorical and exogenous to the Qur'ān itself. I use it to indicate what we call today, not without heavy ideological biases, "societies," "cultures," even "civilizations." It goes without saying therefore that a new concept of the human that ensues, as just one variety among others, from the Qur'ānic message does not and cannot allow for such nationalistic and political conceptions.

21. Hallaq, *Restating Orientalism*, 249–58.

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See also Genequand.

Ibn Ṭufayl. *See* Goodman, Lynn.

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