Is European Islam Experiencing an Ontological Revolution for an Epistemological Awakening?

Mohammed Hashas

Abstract

This paper argues that European Islam is experiencing an ontological revolution that revisits epistemological foundations in order to endorse some basic values of modernity.[1] In addition to revisiting the classical ontological-epistemological bond that characterizes most Islamic scholarship in the context of multicultural liberal societies, it emphasizes the questions of ethics and spirituality.

Such an endeavor is described here as "revisionist-reformist," revisionist in the sense that it is broadly a continuity of a rationalist trend in Islamic thought, and reformist in the sense that it updates a number of values that have for centuries been narrowed down to revealed/prescribed laws. This reformist tendency allows European Islam to open new pathways outside what could be called "classical dichotomous thought," which sees only antagonism between reason and faith, or between religion and politics. Religion, ethics, and reason are considered inseparable ontologically and complementary epistemologically; they are not seen as mutually contradictory or antagonistic.

Mohammed Hashas holds a PhD in Political Theory, with a dissertation on "The Idea of European Islam" (2013), from the Department of Political Science at LUISS Guido Carli University of Rome, where he is currently a postdoctoral research fellow. Hashas is also joining the American University of Rome from September 2014 as an adjunct faculty to teach Arabic, and Islam and Politics courses. Previously, he held fellowships from Babylon Center for the Study of the Multicultural Society in Tilburg University, in the Netherlands (July-September 2010), and from the Center for European Islamic Thought in Copenhagen University (2011-2012).

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Introduction

The reemergence of religion, with the particular and substantial visibility of Islam and Muslims, in Western liberal societies has seemingly triggered profound questions on theoretical as well as practical levels for both scholars and policymakers.[2] The public sphere seems to be revisiting its foundations to accommodate the plurality of worldviews that multicultural societies engender. While sociological data already shows an advanced level of multiculturalism, by which is meant the presence – but not too advanced level – of co-existence among peoples with differing religious, moral, and philosophical views under one state law,[3] the theoretical paradigms that try to capture this sociological fact are "catching up" with it through models and structures that embrace as much of this diversity as possible.[4]

Contemporary Islamic thought, as it has traditionally developed in Muslim-majority countries, is not immune from multiculturalism. European Islam, as studied here,[5] seems to stand on the middle ground and appears to be the most concerned with these issues for two main reasons. First, as a European project, it shares both the achievements of the modern liberal democratic state and the current challenges that face its primarily epistemological grounds and diversity. Second, as a project belonging to a tradition that historically developed outside of Europe, it experiences the responsibility of bringing two traditions (commonly, but erroneously, referred to as Islamic vs.Western) together as much as possible to safeguard the basic commonalities that the modern state requires of the worldviews beneath its sovereignty. Thus, the main challenge facing European Islam is whether it can meet and agree on the epistemological foundations, that is to say human reason and not (only) revelation,[6] that govern and contribute to Europe's liberal societies on equal basis – at least equally on the political level, if not on the moral level as well.

As will be clarified in this paper, European Islam is still revisiting its foundations and is searching for shared grounds that can accommodate the "Islamic faith in the divine" and the "European faith in reason."[7] When the practical level seems more complicated, it is the theoretical level, sometimes the profoundly theoretical level, to which research must direct itself. This paper views

the subject from such a perspective and takes ontology and epistemology as the levels that have to be revisited so as to better understand emerging European Islamic thought.

I argue that European Islam, even in its most reformist version, does not untie the classical ontological-epistemological bond.[8] It does, however, reinterpret it so as to endorse some basic values of modernity, with a strong emphasis on ethics and spirituality, and to avoid a total break with the divine. European Islam targets an "ontological revolution"[9] that revisits Islamic- and European-dominant epistemological foundations. In this way, it stands as a revisionist-reformist undertaking, revisionist in the sense that it is broadly a continuity of a rationalist trend in Islamic thought, and reformist in the sense that it updates a number of values that have for centuries been narrowed down to revealed/prescribed laws. Its reformist tendency allows it to open new pathways outside what could be termed the "classical dichotomous mode of thought" (e.g., divine vs. secular, revelation vs. reason, church vs. state) that has characterized European interaction with religion for so long.

Islamic thought has not avoided these same issues, although it generally claims to be immune to them.[10] The new direction of European Islam (along with a number of projects in contemporary Islamic thought) seems to be heading toward the restoration of the "original" communion between the divine and the secular, the source of ethics, and the ethics of reasoning. As will be clarified, religion, ethics, and reason are considered ontologically inseparable and epistemologically complementary, rather than mutually contradictory or antagonistic. Such a reading is not totally new in Islamic thought[11]; however, here it is updated in the light of modernity and multiculturalism.

The paper is structured as follows: (1) a contextualization of the question asked in the title by linking it to its sociopolitical context; (2) a summarization of the debate's epistemological-ontological origins in classical Islamic thought; this section centralizes the question of ethics and its sources (revelation and/or reason) at the productive era of Islamic theology known as *kalām* (religious dispute); (3) a clarification, but only as space allows, of the content of the ontological-epistemological bond referred to; (4) a consideration of reformist European Islam as part of the ongoing debate in contemporary Islamic thought, which opens it up to the issue of ontological revolution and epistemological awakening raised here for comparative purposes and, most importantly, for an understanding of what European Islam is about; this section condenses four of the projects that claim to defend European Islam; its reformist direction, and its belonging to both the Islamic worldview (with reference to the creed) and to European modernity (with reference to the particular aspect of human agency

and the faculty of reason). No claim is made that this is unique to European modernity and thus not to the Islamic tradition. In fact, as will be illustrated, European Islam attempts to overcome dichotomous thought (e.g., Islam vs. West, and reason vs. religion), the projects studied are those of Bassam Tibi, Tariq Ramadan, Tareq Oubrou, and Abdennour Bidar; (5) a presentation of the conclusions that this paper considers its argument, namely, the answers the main question raised at the top of this paper. It offers the image of the Muslim Prometheus as an expression of the quiet ontological revolution and epistemological awakening that European Islamic thought is experiencing; and (6) the conclusion of the paper by raising some major challenges to the argument introduced here.

Origins of the Islamic Ontological-Epistemological Bond: Ethics

The question of ethics has traditionally been the heart of the matter in Islamic disciplines,[12] to the extent that some scholars summarize Islam's message as ethics, while others emphasize its more social aspect and advance its message of social justice.[13] Whichever of the two is more prevalent, the other is by implication quite important as well: The ethical message has to manifest itself in the real world and society, and social justice has to be ethically grounded; hence their intertwining territories. Such an overlapping has fused revealed/prescribed law into the convictions of faith itself, namely, the creed, to the extent that they have become inseparable. This is why Joseph Schacht (d. 1969) says "it is impossible to understand Islam without Islamic law."[14]

For the last two centuries, the reformist debate has centered on the applicability (or not) of especially Islamic laws, mistakenly but commonly referred to simply as Sharia. Sharia law, Islamic (positive) law, or *fiqh* (not *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the equivalent of legal theories) are the right names for it.[15] Jan-Erik Lane and Hamadi Redissi condense these disciplines and concepts into "thick" and "thin" sharia.[16] Thus the necessity to re-read the tradition to distinguish among (or build anew) moral theology, legal theory, and positive law in Islam has become a requisite for contemporary Muslim scholars.

Such an endeavor, however, may not succeed if reference to early *kalām* (classical Islamic theology) is not revisited as well, for such distinctions flourished during this formative period of Islamic theology before they waned afterward. *Kalām*'s legacy cannot be renewed in a mimetic format, for its first realization had its own sociopolitical environment, which may only be copied or lived again if that environment repeats itself, mostly partially and never

fully. The current context of Islam in Europe, in light of the global movement of human beings and ideas, makes such an environment partially possible, and thus the possibility of the emergence of new *kalām*.[17] Hence the importance of referring in broad terms to the early issue of ethics during *kalām*'s productive era in order to understand the directions European Islam seems to be taking. Without these steps, understanding it merely from political perspectives remains reductionist and limited.[18]

Ever since the formative years of Islamic thought, ethics has been influenced mainly by what Majid Fakhry refers to as scriptural ethics.[19] That is, it has been dominated by the *Koranic ethos* and the teachings of the Sunnah, as narrated and commented upon by the exegetes. The Greek influence on the ethical debate was accommodated during Islam's intellectual high days (mainly between the ninth and eleventh centuries), but that soon faded away.[20] What remained was the scriptural ethics based on religious teachings that are comprehensive in nature but are not formulated into an independent and full-fledged analytical theory of ethics.[21]

Some contemporary scholars have recognized this deficit. The pioneering reformist Sir Seyyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) was among the first "early reformists" to call for a "new Islamic theology of modernity" (*jadīd 'ilm al-kalām*)."[22] Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) worked on the same level[23] as did his compatriot Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), who believed in the necessity of renewing *kalām*'s heritage and building an independent discipline of Islamic ethics.[24] A passage from the latter's *Islam* (1966) corroborates my point: "[A] systematic attempt must be made to elaborate an ethics on the basis of the Quran, for without an explicitly formulated ethical system, one can never do justice to Islamic law."[25] He blames Muslim scholars for that:

> *Muslim scholars have never attempted an ethics of the Quran*, systematically or otherwise. Yet, no one who has done any careful study of the Quran can fail to be impressed by its ethical fervor. Its ethics, indeed, is its essence, and it is also the necessary link between theology and law. It is true that the Quran tends to concretize the ethical, to clothe the general in a particular paradigm, and to translate the ethical into legal or quasi-legal commands. But it is precisely a sign of its moral fervor that it is not content only with generalizable ethical propositions but is keen on translating them into actual paradigms…The Quran always explicates the objectives or principles that are the essence of its laws. […] *The Muslims' failure to make a clear distinction between Quranic ethics and law* has resulted in a confusion between the two. Neither ethics nor law ever became a discipline in itself.[26] [Emphasis added]

Mohamed Arkoun (d. 2010) repeatedly raised the idea but continued to busy himself with developing linguistic tools for decoding the orthodox texts, initiating two fields of study (Applied Islamology and Critique of Islamic Reason), and leaving the project of developing an independent ethical system unaccomplished. His main work on Islamic ethics was his PhD (later published as a book) on the renowned ethicist Ibn Miskawayh (d. 1030), which was followed in 2005 by *Humanism and Islam*.[27] Hassan Hanafi (b. 1936), and Abu Ya'rib al-Marzouki (b. 1947) have also strongly called for the rebirth of *kalām* as a way of reinvigorating Islamic thought.[28] Taha Abderrahmane (b. 1944), who seems to have given the question more substantial space during the last decade, makes ethics the basis of human existence and thought on the grounds that human existence, religion, and ethics are not separate entities.[29] Mohamed Abed Aljabri (d. 2010) systematizes Arab-Islamic ethical thought, as well as its sources, influences, and predicaments, and presents the idea that faith and practice (or doing) for the public good (*al-īmān wa al-'amal al-ṣāliḥ*) is the core ethical message of Islam that has hardly been used to build an independent ethical theory.[30] According to these reformists, it appears that any claim of reform devoid of an independent and renewed ethical discipline remains a shallow adaptation or mimicry.

The point is that such scholars refuse to call a claim that drops religious laws in order to adapt to modern requirements (e.g., liberty and equality) "reformist" unless this claim revisits the élan of religion and its ethicist message, which most Muslim scholars agree is remarkably clear in the revealed text. Such required ethicist readings actually go to the heart of Islamic scholarship in its classical-era religious scholarly disputes known as *kalām*.

Content of the Ontological-Epistemological Bond: Ethics between Revelation and Reason

George Hourani says that two kinds of questions busied early Muslim minds: ontological and epistemological. The first was posed as follows: (1) "What is the nature of ethical value concepts such as the good and the just?" That is, more simply put, the question tries to arrive at whether ethical values are "objective" and worth what they are intrinsically, or whether they are "subjective" and need a Lawgiver and agent to make them meaningful. The second primal question was posed as follows: (2) "How can Man know the presence and force of these concepts in particular situations?" The answer was either: Man can know that through reason (rationalism) or through revelation (traditionalism).[31]

Mariam al-Attar invokes Euthyphro's dilemma, uttered through Socrates' tongue, in summarizing the questions of the early Muslim theologians-philoso-

phers: "Is the pious and holy beloved by the gods because it is holy, or holy because it is beloved by the gods?" For al-Attar, the Muslim jurists in particular would have phrased the question as: "Is what is good commanded by God because it is good, or is it good because it is commanded by God?" Her answer is as follows: "[C]ertainly the answer would be that what is good is commanded by God because it is good, especially when we take into consideration that they considered *maṣlaḥa* and the welfare of human beings the ultimate purpose of revelation."[32] I return to Hourani's classification for its relevance here.

To the ontological question formulated as "What is the nature of ethical value concepts such as the good and the just?" Hourani provides two main answers from the Islamic tradition: (A) objective (objectivism) or (B) subjective (subjectivism). The nature of values (or right) is (A) objective when "there are real qualities or relations of acts that make them right [...] independently of the opinions of the person who judges them right or wrong."[33] This means that values hold no intrinsic value in themselves; rather, they acquire such a value through the benefits they beget. This view was held by early Muslim philosophers (e.g., al-Farabi and Ibn Sina) and the Mu'tazili rationalist school.

The nature of values (or right) is (B) subjective when it has no objective meaning; in other words, "it means whatever is approved or commanded by someone or other."[34] The first type of this subjectivist view is (Ba) termed human social subjectivism, meaning that it is the Muslim community (*umma*) that emphasizes certain values, which may be a mixture of religious and customary laws, and elevates them to the status of authority. This goes with the idea that whatever is good for the community is good for God. The second type of this subjectivism is (Bb) theistic or divine subjectivism, by which is meant that "ethical value concepts must be understood in terms of God's will."[35] This view has become the dominant one among Sunni jurists and theologians.

As for the epistemological question "How can man know the presence and force of ethical value concepts in particular situations?" Hourani's synthetical classification provides two answers: (C) rational (rationalism) and (D) traditional (traditionalism). The rational tendency (C) defends the idea that "what is right can be known by independent reason."[36] This tendency is twofold: One (Ca) is completely rational and contends that what is right can always be known by independent reason, as al-Farabi and the late Mu'tazila argued, and the other (Cb) is partially rational and contends that what is right can be reached by reason alone (late Mu'tazila are also categorized here), or by sources derived from revelation like consensus and reasoning by analogy (as defended by the Hanafis and Malikis), or by both (as defended by the Maliki Averroes). This contention is reconciliatory and sees no contradiction between reason and revelation. The

traditional tendency (D) contends that an ethical value (what is right) can be known only by revelation; reason can be used only to prove this contention through conclusions reached by consensus and analogy; it becomes a dependent reason. Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Hazm, the Zahiris, Ibn Taymiyyah, and the Wahhabis belong to this (epistemologically) traditional class.[37]

After this classificatory view, Hourani ends his book with a passage in which he says that if Islamic thought seeks revival, it has to build on the Mu'tazila's rationalist heritage.[38] He bases this on his own reading of the Qur'an and the intellectual tradition of early Muslim scholars. He thinks that the Mu'tazila seem to be the closest to how the Qur'an speaks of values and reason. Ontologically, he argues that

> the Quran frequently refers to objective values, which cannot be analyzed completely in terms of commands and obedience. This conclusion coincides with that of the classical Mu'tazilites.[39]

That is, values in the Qur'an are emphasized through the frequent invitations to contemplation, reasoning, empiricism, and experiences, be they historical, scientific, or prophetic. These values, as Hourani reads the Qur'an, are not linked just with commands and obedience, as some Qur'anic verses specify. For him, the call for reasoning is more emphasized than particular prescriptions, which means that values, although emphasized throughout, are often left unspecified so that reason can explore them. This rationalist perspective on the ontological level is demurred at the epistemological level, where all knowledge – in its abstract and general forms – is still considered divine: "Here the emphasis is on Man's need for divine guidance in ethical matters."[40] The human ability to rationally reach the value of values is espoused to divine guidance in conceiving and construing knowledge.

In summarizing terms based on the above abbreviated classifications, Hourani hopes that Islamic thought will build on 1A2Ca, or simply ACa: ontological objectivism and epistemological complete-rationalism. These two levels (ontology and epistemology) are not violently severed; instead, they are harmoniously considered. Regardless of the degree to which reason can conceive and construct values independently of revelation at the epistemological level, according to Hourani, it remains attached to the divine, the source of all knowledge, for guidance in ethical matters. What this further means is that knowledge, as produced by human beings, is in essence divine, and that reason, however objectivist it may be at the ontological level, is in essence ethical (divine). According to the Mu'tazila school's objectivism, reason remains divine despite the common interpretation that tries

to look simply at this school's ontological interpretation of the nature of ethical values without considering its epistemological view, which remains traditional (i.e., linked with the divine), because the divine cannot will something unethical.

A simple but profound question may be raised here: Why did Mu'tazili rationalism not lead to the denial of the divine if the source of ethical values is objective (pure reason)? Such a question is epistemic in nature, for although reason is the source of knowledge and ethical values, it does not create them. This is where the question of ontological nature remains fundamental to the Mu'tazila. The historical (political-ideological) circumstances in which *kalām* schools and the Mu'tazila developed are bracketed here. It suffices to summarize the point as follows: In the rationalist Mu'tazila and the semi-rationalist Ash'ari schools, the dominant theological school until now in most of the Islamic world, reason and revelation do not – or at least should not – deny each other; they are complementary.

The Mu'tazila adopt the views of natural law; however, for them natural law, although reached and developed by humanity, is God-given and not an independent force. Therefore "all knowledge" is God's, but specific knowledge is human. Saying that natural law is humanity's or God's means that humanity always considers another superior power that has created it; the origin of power is divine, but its application and development is left to reason. This is why ties with the divine are not cut and why God is not killed or violently rebelled against. Thus they differ from the European view of natural law, which is not only ontologically objective but also epistemologically purely rationalist. In my view, then, the Mu'tazila view natural law as divine in essence; humanity is empowered to think of it and carry it out. Thus its judges, like the famous rationalist Qadi Abd al-Jabbar (d. 1025), agreed to sharia law because they saw it, at least at their own time, as highly rationalist in its prescriptions for individual and social affairs.

The principle that reason proves revelation and does not contradict it, and if it seems to do so then there must be something wrong in its interpretation of revelation, was the norm among Muslim rationalists. Thus Hourani calls Mu'tazila rationalism "partial rationalism."[41] That is why Montgomery Watt said they seemed close to the contemporary liberalism of nineteenth-century Europe[42] and why Richard Martin, et.al, held that they were close to Enlightenment ideals.[43] Classical Islamic reason, following this perspective, acknowledges reason as a superior faculty at the epistemological level, but does so without saying that there is no ultimate authority beyond it (this faculty). It appears that such reasoning keeps the ontological origins of all knowledge in

mind and leaves the details to reason the ethics that accompanies it.[44] This is the case, at least in theory. It has to be remembered that Islamic jurisprudence and *kalām* were independent disciplines, which means that the Mu'tazila's theories were generally not tested on the ground and were hardly endorsed by the political will, except for an unsuccessful fifteen-year period (833-48), known as the *miḥna* (Inquisition-like). This period ended with the return of the dominant Ash'ari doctrine, which considers reason only insofar as it proves/supports revelation.[45]

In this section I attempted to trace the broad lines of where revelation and reason stand in classical Islamic thought. Reference to particular schools of thought or scholars with examples was avoided for the sake of theoretical understanding. Theological debates on creation, God, His attributes, the Qur'an (whether eternal or created), the need for prophecy, oneness, justice, and so on were at the heart of classical debates, and reason and revelation were the references as well as the arbiters among scholars. Given its relevance to understanding the divine as well as the human rational faculty, ethics stood as an eminent subject of study. Understanding the sources of ethics and their impact meant an understanding of God and creation (viz., humanity, nature, and the cosmos). That is why I noted earlier that contemporary Islamic thought is interested in renewing *kalām* debates because of their impact on other disciplines and knowledge production, ethics in the lead.

European Islam: Revisiting the Ontological-Epistemological Bond

This section sheds light on the type of European Islam that claims to be reformist and suited for liberal and multicultural societies. I make two major but brief notes without further argumentation here about the contemporary Islamic reformist scholarship that keeps the line between what is commonly referred to as classical Islam and modern Islam. One, those who could be termed "early reformists" of the latter are the pioneers of the so-called Arab-Islamic Renaissance that started with the Middle East's first contact with the modern West since the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt (1798-1801). Scholars like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897) and Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905), woke up to the fact that classical Islam legacy of scholarship had fallen into decadence roughly from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century.

Many reformists have invested a lot of effort in bringing back the spirit of early Muslim reason, with the Mu'tazila looked at nostalgically by some

as a great school to learn from and build upon. Albert Hourani refers to this Renaissance as the liberal age of contemporary Arab thought.[46] However, these early reformists did not go beyond the Sharia law prescriptions. Without further reference to George Hourani's earlier classification of Islamic scholarship, early reformists seem to stand in the BD category (i.e., ontologically subjective and epistemologically traditional): ontologically, values are willed and judged by an external authority (God); and epistemologically, reason cannot reach them alone without revelation.

Two, what could be referred to as "late reformists" (e.g., Fazlur Rahman, Mohamed Arkoun, Hassan Hanafi, and Taha Abderrahmane) have borrowed and/or developed modern hermeneutical-historicist approaches to reading the Qur'an. This theoretically allows going beyond the prescribed/revealed laws by reclaiming human agency and reason without denying revelation and its objectives, often summarized in ethics and/or social justice. With reference to George Hourani's earlier classification, they broadly seem to stand in the ACb category: ontological objectivism and epistemological partial-rationalism. This needs further examination. (I believe this is not a total replication of the Mu'tazila attitude, but rather a building on and improvement of it). These two notes succinctly contextualize European Islam in the line of the Islamic tradition and especially its reformist contemporary trends. Yet the ontological-epistemological attitude toward which it is moving is ACa: ontological objectivism and epistemological total-rationalism. I now summarize the selected projects of European Islam.

Bassam Tibi's Cultural Modernity and Euro-Islam

Bassam Tibi builds his version of Euro-Islam from a securitization (political) perspective. He therefore securitizes the issue of reforming Islam. He considers most of the reformist projects as inadequate or as not reformist enough if they do not endorse fully what could be termed the Euro-modernity model, or what he refers to as cultural modernity (i.e., modernity *à l'Européene*). Tibi's Euro-Islam could be examined based on three levels of argumentation. First, Islam is not Islamism (a "jihadization of Islam"), but a religion that is peaceful and personal, whereas Islamism is violent and hegemonic.[47] The sociopolitical and cultural realities of Muslim-majority countries are scrutinized, based on modern European sociology and political philosophy. Despite the analytical tools he uses, he does not claim that the Qur'an/scriptures themselves are generally the problem behind stagnation, but that Arab-Islamic reason is unable to live up to Islam's ideals, ideals that he summarizes as peace

and spiritual nourishment for the individual. He argues that the status quo of these societies has been strongly influenced by tribalism and patriarchy.

Second, secular Islam is the key to reform. The resurgence of religion and violent fundamentalism are symptoms of political Islam's (or Islamism's) failure to reemerge intellectually. The inability to perceive a civil Islam that can cope with global changes leads to a defensive reaction that takes the past Muslim political community as the model for Islamic states in which religion and politics are fused. The revival of religious concepts like Sharia law, *umma*, and jihad manifest an inability to develop a modern political philosophy that takes current challenges into account. Islamism, for Tibi, threatens Muslim-majority countries, neighboring Europe, and world peace. It must be fought.[48]

Third, cultural modernity[49] is the way toward religious reform and cultural change. Euro-Islam is the version of this reform in Europe. Three pillars form the cultural modernity that it has to embrace: (1) the secularization (vs. desecularization) of politics, (2) the endorsement of individual human rights to develop pluralism (vs. supremacism claimed by religious dogma), and (3) the revival of the classical heritage of *falsafa* (philosophy) and rationalism (vs. orthodoxy), as was exercised by the Mu'tazila and philosophers like Averroes. When Islam embraces these values, which he considers European in origin, it can be open, civil, secular, liberal, and pluralist. This is, in brief, the framework of Tibi's reform of Islam and Euro-Islam.[50]

Unlike some scholars who suspect Tibi of Orientalism, I do not.[51] His reform agenda, which ends in Euro-modernity and Euro-Islam, originates from his concern as a Muslim with the future of reform. He does not want to see any further reform failures, especially with the rise of violent religious fundamentalism, which seems to have so influenced his approach that he does not listen to recognized reformers from within Muslim-majority societies and Muslim communities in Europe. His rejection of reformists like Arkoun, Abu Zayd, Hanafi, (the early work of) Abdullahi an-Na'im, and Ramadan (on European Islam) makes him reject interesting projects that revisit the Qur'an, Sunnah, and classical scholarship from within the tradition. His praise of Aljabri's work, on the other hand, finds no theoretical echoes in his own approach, for the latter's project is fundamentally an examination of classical Islamic thought within the Arabian mindset and culture.[52] Such a critique cause those who read Tibi to welcome his ideas but not his Euro-centered – not to say Euro-centrist – methodology and references.

More particularly, Tibi remains entrenched in the private vs. public European, especially French, dichotomous relation between the state and the church/religion. He does not try some other pathway that overcomes this clas-

sical dichotomy. What he brings to Islamic thought in general and to European Islam in particular is more politically oriented and thus leaves the theological unfathomed. Hence he does not solve the real predicament of Islamic thought in the modern age and as lived (i.e., as manifested in Euro-Islam) in liberal societies. His idea of secularizing Islam through the private vs. public classical solution faces a major problem when the idea of rationalism, as he advocates, is thought of more deeply.

The European Muslim citizen, for instance, has to live the private vs. public dichotomous way of life; that is, the secular remains superior because it dominates public life, whereas the private remains personal and has to be kept as invisible as possible. If Tibi's secular Islam adapts to secular Europe, it does so from an adaptive, defensive, and classical perspective: faith is not part of the plural life he advocates, since it has to be kept private, and is therefore indirectly deprived of confidently contributing to the social contract that binds all citizens equally, despite the moral background that encourages each of them to consider himself/herself a contributor to this contract.

Tibi's liberal Islam is also nurtured by Euro-modernist classical dichotomous thought, because it presupposes that modern values are European and that religion (Islam) has to abide by these "superior" values. His project replaces religious dogma and superiority with the Euro-modernity superiority complex. It is not grounded on a theological rereading of the sources; rather it is adaptive, to differentiate it from the reformists. This gap in Tibi's approach is more delved into by Ramadan and Oubrou and especially Bidar, who rereads modernity as a sacred moment, as will be presented afterwards, Bidar's project could be read as a philosophical-theological continuity of the political adjustments especially of Tibi's work and Ramadan's controversial – unfinished, I should say – project of radical reform.

Tariq Ramadan's Radical Reform

Ramadan's reform agenda and version of European Islam could be read as an attempt to fill the missing theological part in Tibi's work.[53] I distinguish between "early Ramadan" and "late Ramadan." Three levels of work characterize "early Ramadan." First, he integrates the beautiful in the tradition. For example, he rereads the Prophetic experience from an ethical perspective and situates his views on the controversial issues that Islam in Europe especially raises (e.g., issues of loyalty, jihad, polygamy, and gender equality).[54] Second, he situates himself in the line of such early reformists as al-Afghani, Abduh, Rida, and his

grandfather Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928. His call for renewal in juridical theories remains advocated from within the classical hermeneutical sciences, although he tries to be eclectic in his approach and takes from various juridical schools.[55] Third, at this level he is very much entrenched in the classical dichotomy of Islam vs. the West, a fact to which his early books testify. For example, during this phase he speaks of Islamic modernity as a replacement of the West's irreligious and unethical modernity.[56] His critique of some aspects of Western modernity (e.g., unlimited liberty, materialism, and consumerism) earns him many non-sympathizers and contributes to constructing the image of "double speak"[57] around him.

The "late Ramadan" develops mainly from his *Radical Reform*.[58] As he notes in that book, and earlier in introducing *Western Muslims*,[59] he moves from calling for a "small intellectual revolution" to calling for a "true intellectual revolution" à la Kant's "Copernican Revolution." Ramadan moves from "adaptation reform" to "radical reform" or "transformation reform," to use his terms. His radical reform agenda is based on three main concepts, the scope of which intertwines. One, Sharia is redefined as the way.[60] Far from the conservatives and radical secularists' reduction of it to legal matters and the penal code, he takes this concept back to its classical meaning of a way of life or a worldview that is divinely guided and irreducible to particular law prescriptions or isolated norms. Sharia becomes the way of a universal Islam that protects three major rights in Ramadan's classification: life, nature, and peace. These are its first three guiding objectives.

Two, the Abode of Testimony (*dār al-shahāda*) becomes the living experience of Sharia in the sense that it knows neither private vs. public distinction nor the geographical classifications of the Abode of War (*dār al-ḥarb*) and Abode of Peace (*dār al-islām/al-silm*). Neither time nor space can interrupt this concept's validity because it becomes the living proof of belief, the basis of which is Islam's first pillar: *tawḥīd* (God's oneness). The concept of *shahāda* empties other concepts (e.g., *umma*, jihad, and *da'wa* [proselytization]), of their interpretations invoked by some fundamentalists, especially in Europe. *Umma* thus becomes a spiritual community, not a geographic entity; jihad is spiritual and opposes oppression and injustice done to the world and nature; and *da'wa* means living what one preaches, not seeking converts.

Three, I condense Ramadan's other views on reason, environment, economics, and so on in the concept of ethics or the ethical. At the heart of this concept is his consideration of the universe as a Second Book of Revelation besides the First Book (i.e., the Qur'an). Such a consideration could be read

as the most radical in Ramadan's view – his "Copernican Revolution" – because reading the universe in such a way means that it is sacralized and that human agency is not given a second place after the revelation's prescriptions, like those of Sharia law, but is made equal to the First Book, which he considers a book of guidance.[61] The management of the universe is in Man's Hands, and the only "thing" that links it with the First Book is guidance and spirituality, summarized in ethical responsibility. Reason, which governs the Second Book, keeps its ethical guidance provided in the Qur'an.

This is the major sign of continuity and attachment to the metaphysical in Ramadan's reform project. The ethical here is lived as a *shahāda* that follows the way (Sharia). The laws that govern Man in the universe are no longer made ready somewhere else, but are developed in this same universe. That is, all knowledge produced by Man remains spotted with divinity through the concept of *shahāda* that follows the Sharia. Since the two Books are complementary and considered equal, their laws that govern societies should be complementary, if not the same. Oubrou moves to this direction of fusing laws and thus gradually reducing the schism between secular vs. divine law.

Tareq Oubrou's Secularization of Islamic Theology

Oubrou aims to secularize Islam theologically (what he calls theological secularization), an approach Tibi calls for but does not theorize from within the tradition. Oubrou considers three "Books": revelation, the universe, and Man. This denotes that God, the omnipresent Creator, is disconnected from one single reading of the Qur'an. If revelation mediates between God and Man, then Man also mediates between God and revelation. Thus a world of mediation has to be taken into account when interpreting God and revelation. Such mediation happens in the universe, in context, in which the leading agent is Man. Based on this division, his argument can be condensed into three conceptual levels: "geotheology," "Sharia of the minority," and "secularization of theology."[62]

One, Oubrou believes that the world's diversity necessitates the development of geotheology,[63] a theology that takes its spatial (geographical) and temporal conditions into account. He considers the national, regional, and global levels that are necessary for this concept's successful development. In the case of Islam, the notion of the political *umma* is accordingly invalidated, for each national political entity can develop its version of living and practicing Islam (e.g., French Islam). The same applies regionally (European Islam), for the proximity between those geographies that share a particular history and cul-

tural habits. This way, at the global level Islam retains only its broad lines of ethics and spirituality. Oubrou is aware that geotheology minoritizes Islam, for only in this way can Islam be universal. A "double reflection" between the guiding text and the lived context becomes a constant necessity to keep the approach of geotheology perpetually updated.[64]

Two, this minoritization is developed through his concept of "Sharia of the minority," which relativizes Sharia to cater to the believers' needs. He develops levels of reading the classical juridical tool of (positive and negative) fatwas to make religion merciful and beautiful (*douce*) to its adherents and to add value to their life, a practice that, he says, the Prophet taught (the joy of faith [*ḥalāwat al-īmān*]). Such an approach contracts and relativizes the Sharia, unlike the classical view that maximalizes its jurisprudence in its catering to the believers' expectations. The relativization then passes through the three levels of geotheology and ends in ethicizing it. The improvement of one's behavior and sense of being is the Sharia's essence, and its legal aspect is but a means to that good.[65]

Three, because he seeks to relativize Sharia through ethicizing it, Oubrou uses the classical fatwa (production of religiously legal but not binding opinions) paradigm to build a *rapprochement* between secular and religious law. He does not want to see believers living in the modern liberal societies of Europe – in his case France – burdened by having to deal with a secular and a religious law. The solution, therefore, is to fuse these two laws by, for example, incorporating French law into the "metabolism and the economy of the Sharia."[66] In other words, he wants to see a theological secularization of Islam that allows Muslims to feel both religious and still contribute to the secular and modern European world in which they reside. In other words, Islamic norms become localized, institutionalized, and nationalized.[67]

Until now, the above three projects could be summarized as follows, as if each builds on the preceding one to overcome the classical dichotomous thought of either/or or divine vs. secular. Tibi advocates direct secularization by adopting the *laïcist* dichotomy (private vs. public). Ramadan softens this classical dichotomy by presenting the universe as a second revealed Book in which Man's vicegerency and rational advancement complements the guiding ethical principles generally conveyed in the first revealed Book: the Qur'an. This paves the way for considering human (secular) law part of the divine will. Oubrou works at this level of convergence and seeks to fuse the two laws in an attempt to transcend those approaches that still divide the world into two, like Ramadan's. Abdennour Bidar tries a more innovative path in European Islamic thought.[68]

Abdennour Bidar's Overcoming Religion

Bidar, the youngest scholar in this group, wants to break away from classical dichotomous thought by sacralizing modernity, beyond the consideration of two or three Books (as Ramadan and Oubrou attempt). This view appears to be the most innovative one, for not only does he challenge Islamic thought to move beyond the box it has been entangled in ever since its first contact with the modern Europe, but also challenges European secular and atheist thought to go beyond living a constant faith vs. politics binary.

Bidar sees modernity as the age of maturity of Man: modernity's values have sensitized Man to his capabilities, and religious values are the guardian of these values – not in the sense of being paternalist – since European modernity has failed to capture the infinite energy with which Man is endowed. Considering modernity's values sacred dismisses the classical dichotomy of thinking for being minor and finite: being either religious or secular, divine or mundane, Eastern or Western. But is also does not give a complete version of Man's capabilities. The convergence of the divine and the secular gives birth to rational spirituality and ethical responsibility harmoniously, which makes his approach theosophic.[69] His argument is based on three stages of intellectual development that correspond, in my reading, to three concepts: "Self Islam," "Islamic existentialism," and "overcoming religion."

First, Self Islam is formulated following a personal experience of faith in a secular context. Having grown up in a secular context with a traditional understanding and practice of Islam common among practicing believers, Bidar realizes that a believer living in a modern society lives a difficult internal life, one that sees the world as replete with dichotomies and binary oppositions. Henceforth, this concept comes to converge these dichotomies by sacralizing modernity by seeing it as an unprecedented event of the sacred willed by God Himself. He fuses *tawḥīd*, *shahāda*, the Sufi mystical tradition, and modernity's three values (viz., liberty, equality, and fraternity).[70]

Second, at this stage of Islamic existentialism and sacralization of modernity, Bidar remains preoccupied with how to read the sacred text in light of modernity values. Here, he speaks of five matrices: God, Creation, Prophethood, Qur'an, and *Umma* (i.e., all nations). The link among these matrices is eternal, which allows him to preserve the ontological ties between the first and the fifth matrices. To summarize them here, after having been created from God's soul, Man stayed in Heaven until his creation was perfected. Man then descended to Earth after having been taught all names/knowledge as the chosen caliph of God, His heir. The names followed him as a reminder through prophethood and books of guidance like the Qur'an. The universe was created

to facilitate his descent and reign. Peoples are created equal, with the same divine spirit and trust of inhabiting the world, and managing it in light of the eternal gratitude taught through the spiritual pedagogy of revealed books. This denotes that the distinction between the metaphysical and physical/historical world disappears. Man does not need to live two worlds as if they were discontinuous. His physical and metaphysical life do not differ; whatever one does in this world will be continued in the other world. If one wants to do justice to the divine, which is part of him, it should be done here. Infinity is imbued in his soul, received from the divine upon its creation, and has to be lived without any break and separation between this world and other world. The divine attributes are also Man's attributes. That is the ground for what Bidar calls Islamic existentialism, which does not limit itself to the physical world but lives it as if it were the only one. Accordingly, the inheritance of the world presupposes the immortality of Man. The other world is a metaphor; all happens here.[71]

Third, this stage of overcoming religion and atheism tries to open new paths of thinking for both Islamic and Western thought. He recognizes religion's pivotal role in human history and building past civilizations, despite the dark side of this link. By overcoming religion he does not mean to deny it, but to modernize it without remaining trapped in the limitations of radically secular and/or atheist modernity. This stage attempts not only a reconciliatory worldview in which tolerant religion and soft secularism cohabit, but aspires to merge them into one worldview (*waḥdat al-wujūd* [the oneness of being]).

According to Bidar, the religious and the secular, the divine and the mundane, should be fused together for they are parts of the whole. Neither the past of orthodox Islamic thought (which negates modernity) nor modernity (which negates the divine) is the way toward the future civilization of Man. The "new Adam" has to live again the bond between the divine, a spiritual pedagogy that teaches rational spirituality, and the secular world, the inherited space that is mercifully and gracefully given to Man for his wellbeing and self-realization. Such a view would have immense sociopolitical implications on the modern pluralist world: only the ethical that preserves the good deserves human moral attention; the classical distinction between the secular and the divine becomes redundant, as do their respective laws when they are exclusive. The divine does not need to be protected as a separate world; rather, it is the world as inhabited by Man that deserves this protection. Only a highly committed agency, like that of the divine that acts only mercifully and justly, becomes the basis of measurement of human action. In other words, rational faith has to revisit old understandings of God and the divine because of "spiritual responsibility"[72] for "spiritual modernity."[73]

A Muslim Prometheus

This said, the rationalization of ethics in European Islam does not seem to be a mere replication of Mu'tazili ethical theory, for it develops into making equations. Religion is summarized in its ethical power; ethics is not considered merely objective but as equivalent to the divine, which nurtures it with its attributes. Reason is not considered a separate entity, but part of a whole. It is ontologically born/created ethical, and in the epistemological physical world it works out details for a good materialization of its ethical basis. Religion, ethics, and reason become equal. Henceforth, Man, as an ethical being, is endowed with the liberty to be either ethical or not.[74] According to this European Islamic perspective, this is the question that faces modern Man. Another look at the various European Islam projects helps explain the point further.

Tibi is a strong defender of individual human rights for the success of Islamic reform and Euro-Islam in particular. He also defends the early Islamic rationalists. But, he says that faith is a private matter and thus belongs in the private sphere. At this level of analysis, one might ask: If Tibi calls for rationalizing faith, why should it remain private? A rational faith should be trusted and allowed visibility in the public sphere. This right can sometimes be extended even to dogmatic religious practices, as long as they neither threaten public security and order nor violate the law of the state. So why should his call still stick to the idea of relegating religion to the private sphere? Tibi's view is not elaborate enough to face such a challenging question, for it is blinded by Europe's private vs. public classical view of approaching religion.

The other scholars hardly speak of religion from the private vs. public view since their reform projects aim to overcome it. Ramadan´s elevation of the universe to divinity (First Book = Second Book) implies that the Sharia's divinely prescribed prescriptions for sociopolitical as well as individual matters (e.g., questions of equality, inheritance, and the penal code) can be rearranged according to this world's needs. He does not say that they are *wrong*, but that reason *is capable of* understanding the Sharia's intent and thus able to reform how it has been interpreted for mundane matters. He thereby places upon reason a responsibility that makes its capability *equal* to the divine's reactions to the Prophetic moment and the needs of Muhammad's society. Ramadan's elevation of the universe means that the caliph in charge of this universe is supposed to match (or at least try to match) the divine in its ability to prescribe laws and provide answers that benefit society. This is the responsibility that reason supposedly bears in Islam: to constantly look for a way to replicate the Qur'anic moment and Prophetic experience according to diverse human needs as they transpire in light of the divine's ethics and of Man's capabilities.

Ramadan's idea of two Books means that he merges rational capabilities with ethics as generally outlined by the revealed text. The fact that he embraces European modernity values, as long as they give dignity to Man and preserve equilibrium in the natural universe (and rejects that part of modernity that denies the divine and leads to abusing human dignity and meaning in life), shows that he retains from the divine its ethical guidelines for the wellbeing of the world, society, and Man, as broad as this may seem. His "Copernican Revolution" does not give reason alone full reign but binds it to the ethics of the divine, although the latter no longer intervenes in worldly matters directly. The classical (conservative) signs that the divine still plays a direct role in societies through law are now being gradually reformed by reading these laws in their historical context. Revealed prescriptions and narrated stories are signs for contemplation from which other forms of management of the world could develop, as long as their ethical spirit or essence is kept.

Since the essence of the divine (First Book) is ontologically ethical and made equal to the universe (Second Book), the latter's spirit is also ethical. Ramadan does not say clearly that reason is created ethical (at the ontological level), but his idea of the Second Book says that it is supposed to find this out by itself through remembering the divine trust (*amāna*) (and also) through experience and produced knowledge. So, at least at the epistemological level, reason is supposed to be ethical. This view is indirectly proposed – and deduced – at the ontological level through his First Book = Second Book equation. If the epistemologically ethical Second Book equals the ontologically ethical First Book, it is also correct to assume that this equality binds reason to the divine and vice versa. Consequently, even if the second assumption is the one closest to Ramadan's view, it does not change the conclusion that ethics at the epistemological level is bound (or equal) to ethics at the ontological level. More precisely, for Ramadan religion becomes equal to ethics, and reason becomes equal to ethics; subsequently, religion and reason are equal. That is what I mean by the rationalization of ethics or the rationalization of faith in European Islamic thought.

The same process of linking the divine, ethics, and reason applies to Oubrou, who speaks of Three Books and equally emphasizes the question of ethics and spirituality in Islam. Since he is close to Ramadan on this matter, I do not need to say the same thing about him. What should be remembered, however, is that Oubrou uses a classical paradigm of jurisprudential production (i.e., fatwas) to update Islamic law and adapt it gradually to secular law, a process in his secularization of Islamic theology. Bidar's example deserves a more attentive reading because he goes beyond both Ramadan and Oubrou

in speaking of Books, and makes the bond between the physical and metaphysical even stronger.

Bidar's last intellectual stage (stage 3) of overcoming religion and atheism explains well the previous stages of Islamic existentialism (stage 2) and Self Islam (stage 1) that, all together, underpin the place of reason in faith. He does not reproduce a scheme of two harmonious worlds, as do Ramadan and Oubrou, but rather speaks of one historical (physical) world in which the divine and the secular are inseparable. Modernity is considered a will of God, which overcomes the divine vs. secular dichotomy upon which Euro-modernity and most classical thought is based. Self Islam is based on Euro-modernity's three basic values (viz., liberty, equality, and fraternity); Bidar provides theological justifications for them from the Qur'an, the Sunna, and the Sufi tradition. Belief that is inherited culturally, without personal engagement in deconstructing it and subsequently endorsing or leaving it with conviction, remains a classical dogma that soon falls into supremacist views that deny the other his/her being and difference, a difference that is willed/created by the same divine power.

Bidar's Islamic existentialism seeks to merge the physical and metaphysical worlds into one that the believer experiences physically. So as not to sever the former from the latter, he formulates a link between five matrices (God, Creation, Prophethood, the Qur'an, and the *Umma*), the origin of which is the matrix of God, the divine. The other matrices develop from the soul and will of God. The universe of the divine (in the metaphysical world) manifests itself in the physical universe in which Islam claims the sealing part (seal of prophecy). In light of this chain of matrices, the individual's capacity of reasoning is ontologically bound by the divine spirit, which makes his/her capacity to act and reason infinite, just like the divine's attribute of infinity. It also makes reason the divine's heir. This inheritance was generously given to Man at his creation. The divine cannot put or create in Man something that harms him, because the divine attributes of justice, beauty, and mercy, for example, make such an option impossible.

Ontologically, then, reason is imbued with (good) divine intents and capabilities. It is these attributes of the divine that Bidar passes on to Man. He conditions his freedom of thought and reasoning on the ethics of the divine. Bidar seems to echo ideas of his theological-philosophical mentor, Mohamed Iqbal, who considers Man a "co-worker" with God in the universe: If God created the world, Man has made it more beautiful.[75] Pure reason could have been taken as the ultimate source of ethical action and morality, but Bidar prefers a higher source for reference, and in so doing elevates the standards of ethics to those of the divine. Otherwise read, faith, ethics, and reason are

inseparable at the ontological level and, by implication, also at the epistemological level, particularly since he speaks of one world in whicih God's heir does not need to wait the metaphysical world in order to feel, perceive, and activate such a unity. Although ethical values have their origin in the metaphysical world, they are praticed and measured in the physical one because this is where the challenge to ethics always lies. Before closing this section, I picture the study's conclusion in the imagery of what I refer to as a metaphysical rebellion of gratitude by the Muslim Prometheus.

I recall that "early Ramadan" was very critical, and to a large extent rejectionist, of Western modernity. Before his "radical reform agenda" in the "late Ramadan" phase, he believed that the Greek myth of Prometheus and his defiance of the gods to get the torch (fire) and hand it to humanity is what has ever since characterized Western thought: divine vs. human agency, and the aftermath of this basic antagonism.[76] He says that Islamic thought reveals a more peaceful relation between God and Man, one that can affect the conception of revelation, reason, ethics, and so on. By coincidence, Bidar also refers to this legend and believes that it has become a Prometheus syndrome that has trapped Western thought.[77] As a way of overcoming the Western rebellion against God(s) and the Islamic orthodox view of submission to God, Bidar suggests Self Islam, among other concepts, to renew the understanding of God and Man. This gives Man an eternal but ethically responsible inheritance of the universe, without resort to stealing a torch from God or to killing Him. Although he claims that his approach avoids a metaphysical rebellion, he actually launches it – but peacefully. His theory of immortality and concept of heir of God speak of it.

Based on these two references, the image of a Muslim Prometheus can be borrowed to express a direction that European Islam seems to be taking. (In this sense, Muslim Prometheus can be used interchangeably with European Islamic reason.) The Muslim Prometheus politely asks God to allow him the torch without fighting for or stealing it, and thus avoids an eternal discord between Man and God. This rebellion is also non-Satanic, for the Muslim Prometheus does not defy God but only claims that he has now realized what he failed to realize earlier: to act as a fully free individual (Self Islam, freedom) who recognizes Man's divine source but still enriches himself by the divine infinite attributes that inspire a higher ethical attitude. The Muslim Prometheus is grateful to the divine for having freely endowed him with His soul, ethics, and rational faculty that Man keeps exploring gradually. According to European Islamic thought, this is the aspect of modernity (= renewal) that touches the understanding of the divine. It seems perpetual and does not stop at the

Euro-modernity version, in which human reason empowers itself and in so doing disregards the divine ungratefully – to echo the thought of Bidar here.

Conclusion

This reading of European Islam does not resolve the issue of Islam and Western (in-)compatibility or mean that the more legal/practical issues can be quickly reduced to the seemingly interesting version of "this European Islam," for other issues still need to be examined to understand this Islamic ontological-epistemological bond. I refer to three major points for further consideration.

One, the fact that I have studied the selected projects together does not necessarily mean they all agree on my conclusions. For instance, it is possible that these texts neither communicate with each other comparatively at the theoretical level nor bring Islamic classical scholarship to the table to build such comparisons. For example, Tibi rejects nearly all contemporary Islamic thought and sticks to the Euro-modernity model despite his claim that his Euro-Islam is rooted in the Islamic worldview. This can partially apply to Ramadan as well, who proposes the Two Books approach but then immediately rejects the idea of reading the Qur'an using modern hermeneutics, or, more importantly, refers neither to the Mu'tazili tradition nor to the idea of the Qur'an's creation by God at a certain point in time and its consequent non-eternal nature. These differences aside, my readings remained faithful to each scholar's claims but scrutinized them following the comparisons adopted for that purpose.

Two, this ontological-epistemological revolution still has to be clarified through various possibilities of approaching and defining its major components and possible categories of revelation, ethics, and reason according to the discipline and space-time circumstances that impact their details. Like classical pluralism, which characterized the interpretation of the Qur'anic text and the prophetic experience in their first moment of interaction with the Arabian context of the seventh century and, later on, with the exposure to the challenges of other traditions (e.g., Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Greek), the current situation of contemporary Islamic thought and European Islam in this case cannot be so much different. Exposure to the multicultural context of liberal societies substantially challenges not only the manifest features of a religious doctrine, but also what it considers to be its immutable and fundamental values.

Otherwise said, the major feature of equating the divine with ethics and reason as European Islamic thought seems to require more theoretical classifications of these entities, notwithstanding their unison, so as to facilitate their understanding and applicability on the ground.[78] European Islam's ontological

revolution and the epistemological awakening it begets will have to be tested as to how they are used with reference to private (individual, not personal) issues of faith, spirituality, and liberty in the age of globalization and modernity, and also with reference to more public (social and/or communal) issues like equality, solidarity, and justice (including such current controversial issues as polygamy and homosexuality). These revolutionary revisions will also be examined through how nature and the universe in general (i.e., environment and spatial explorations as major examples) are reapproached, knowing that even classical Islamic thought had a more harmonious and caring (ethical) outlook of the world, which it considered part of morality and spirituality. Intra- and inter-comparisons with other traditions will be a further clarification and challenge to the reading presented here.[79]

Three, on the practical level, not all European Islams would agree on such a reading.[80] The conservative view, which considers reason as supplementary and a device to help realize the divine, will find in the idea of human autonomy a challenge especially to its religious authority. Individual appropriation of the divine has significant costs for traditional values and interpretations, so this European Islam has a long way to go if it aspires to establish itself as a theoretical solution that policymakers need in liberal societies with large Muslim-minority communities. By implication, reformist trends in Muslim-majority countries may be raising and facing similar issues, and comparisons among the two (European Islam and, say, Arab Islam), could help clarify their theoretical commonalities and differences, as well as their corresponding impacts on the ground.

Endnotes

1. I am very thankful to Safet Bektovic (Oslo University) and Goran Larssen (Gothenburg University) for their fruitful remarks on the draft version of this paper.
2. For example, see Samir Amghar et al., eds., *European Islam: Challenges for Public Policy and Society* (Brussels: Center for European Policy Studies, 2007).
3. Fear of Muslims in the West is still expressed directly or indirectly, and Muslims born and educated in Europe are most often still considered "other Europeans." H. A. Hellyer, *Muslims of Europe: The "Other" Europeans* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009); Joselyne Cesari, *Why the West Fears Islam: An Exploration of Muslims in Liberal Democracies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
4. Some prominent multicultural models include Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) and *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 1995); Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Chandran Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom* (Oxford University Press, 2003); Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, 2d ed. (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave, 2006) and *Europe and the Muslim Question: Does Intercultural Dialogue Make Sense?* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press-ISIM, 2007).

5. Various Islams are being preached in Europe and the Arab-Islamic world. The European Islam studied here is part of those Islams that still need to be examined comparatively, either through intra-comparisons (with various Islamic trends) or inter-comparisons (e.g., with Christian trends at their epoch of reformation and post-reformation, the various secular-liberal trends, and their treatment of religion or with the Indian and Indonesian versions of secularism). For now, I use *European Islam* and *European Islamic thought* interchangeably to generally mean any discourse, concept, or idea that claims to be Islamic and European in theory and/or practice, irrespective of its degree of affiliation with Islam and Europe. European Islam, as understood here, is based on newly emerging sociological-anthropological as well as theological work. The latter one distinguishes European Islam from European Islamic thought, if a line of differentiation has to be drawn. In this sense, I side with scholars like Felice Dassetto, Jorgen Nielsen, Jytte Klaussen, and Jonathan Laurence, whose work tends to see a European Islam emerging, especially from theological perspectives: Felice Dassetto, *La Construction de l´Islam européen: approche socio-anthropologique* (*The Construction of European Islam: Socio-Anthropological Approach*) (Paris and Montreal: L´Harmattan, 1996), 237; 11; Jorgen Nielsen, *Towards a European Islam* (London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1999), 10; Jorgen Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, 3d ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: 2004), 172; Jytte Klausen, *The Islamic Challenge: Politics and Religion in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 204-05; Jonathan Laurence, *The Emancipation of Europe's Muslims: The State's Role in Minority Integration* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), chapters 2 and 8.

   On the theological level, at least two views can be noted: that of Nielsen, who sees European Muslims working out ways to appropriate theological devices of the Islamic tradition as developed between the eighth and eleventh centuries, and Olivier Roy, who sees not a theological debate but a mere individualized and secularized Islam that is not based on profound intellectual debate: "We see then that the minority fact does not necessarily bring about a theological or jurisprudential *aggiornamento* but rather a disconnection between the theological debate and the creativity of a religiosity which is centered on the individual." Olivier Roy, *Vers un islam européen* (*Toward a European Islam*) (Paris: Esprit, 1999), 89. On the other hand, Nielsen notes that "less attention is being paid to the internal debates taking place. Here there is a range of philosophical and theological

discussions, which in many ways remind one of the debates which ranged among Islamic theologians in the formative periods of the eighth-eleventh centuries." Jorgen Nielsen, "The Question of Euro-Islam: Restriction or Opportunity?" in *Islam in Europe: Diversity, Identity, and Influence*, ed. Aziz Al-Azmeh and Effie Fokas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2007), 34.

This noted, "the European Islam" studied here can be labeled "reformist" or "innovative." This "reformist European Islam" is not homogeneous, as the selected scholars in this article show. It is sufficient to briefly note that it differs from (1) "conservative-moderate Islam in Europe," which an institution like the European Council for Fatwa and Research represents, (2) "rejectionist extremist Islam" that is endorsed by movements and parties like Hizb ut-Tahrir and the International al-Qaeda network that opposes modern values and is also involved in destabilizing them with violence, and (3) from a "Euro-centrist Islam" represented by ex-Muslims. For a more sociological-anthropological categorization of various Muslim groups and their perception of "integration in Europe," see Dassetto, *La Construction de l´Islam européen*, op. cit., and Brigitte Maréchal, et al., eds., *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe: Religion and Society* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003). Some possible manifestations of the theological debate raised in this paper are introduced in: Mohammed Hashas, "Pluralism within European Islam: Secularizing Theology, Sacralizing Modernity" in Carmela Decaro Bonella, ed., *Religious Claims in Multicultural Societies: The Legal Treatment* (Rome: LUISS University Press, 2014) pp. 67-86.

6. I am mainly referring to the Kantian tradition that gives absolute authority to human reason and senses, the source of truth, beyond any metaphysical contribution or inspiration. Immanuel Kant, "How Is Metaphysics in General Possible?" in Immanuel Kant's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, ed. Paul Carus (Chicago: Open Court Pub. Co., 1912) 1-163; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
7. This does not mean that Europe is godless and purely rational and that Islam is not rational; thus the "eternal" incompatibility between the two.
8. I use the ontological-epistemological bond to mean the continuity and overlapping that the trilogy of revelation (or religion in general), reason, and ethics plays for individual, social, and cosmic wellbeing. Broadly speaking, in Islamic scholarship, these three entities are ontologically inseparable and thus complementary epistemologically; revelation is not a mere metaphysical matter unlinked to the human good, and so it has to be interpreted in a way that upholds human good. Overall, reason's judgments incline to the good, although it mostly depends on the senses and experience to validate its arguments, and even when considered the only source of distinguishing between right and wrong, leaving aside revelation. Similarly, ethics, however rational they may be, do not close the debate about their origin. If ethics focuses on the issues of good and evil, right and wrong, so does revelation, and reason is the mechanism that tries to comprehend

them. That is, from the Islamic perspective, creation of the world itself is purposeful and good, and the entities that govern it must be good because they are part of the Creator and His good "soul," even when they differ in how they do that. This means that being and doing, belief and action (practice), should go hand in hand to ultimately realize the good.

9. Abdennour Bidar uses this term in his *Comment sortir de la religion* (*How to Overcome Religion*) (Paris: La Découverte, 2012), 166. After the first citation, all subsequent references will be to their English equivalents.
10. An example of classical dichotomous thought as regards the source of ethics and the place of reason in interpreting revelation can be that of classifying the source(s) of ethics, whether pure revelation (which largely corresponds to Fakhry's religious ethics), pure reason (which he refers to as philosophic ethics), reason supported by revelation (which he calls theological ethics), or revelation supported by reason (which matches his scriptural ethics). Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1991).
11. The work of Ibn Rushd (Averroes; d. 1198) is exemplary in this regard: Majid Fakhry, *Averroes - Ibn Roshd: His Life, Works and Influence* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001). However, contemporary Moroccan philosophers Mohamed Abed Aljabri and Taha Abderrahmane hold different views of this heritage. The former sees that the way ahead for Arab-Islamic philosophical renewal should build on Ibn Rushd's work, whereas the latter sees him as an imitator of Aristotle. See Mohamed Abed Aljabri, *Arab-Islamic Philosophy: A Contemporary Critique*, trans. Aziz Abbassi (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999) Chapter: "The future can only be Averroist!"; Taha Abderrahmane, *Ḥiwārātun min Ajli al-Mustaqbal* (*Dialogues for the Future*) (Beirut: Dar al-Hadi, 2003), 119-20.
12. This applies to the major disciplines of creed (*'aqīdah*), textual interpretation of the Qur'an (*tafsīr*), canonization of the Prophetic sayings (*aḥādīth*), jurisprudence in theory and practice (*uṣūl al-fiqh* and *fiqh*), Sufism, and so on.
13. Contemporary ethicist/philosopher Abderrahmane can be cited as an example of scholars who emphasize ethics, while Fazlur Rahman and Hassan Hanafi can be given as examples of scholars who emphasize social justice in Islam. Taha Abderrahmane, *Su'ālu al-Akhlāq: Musāhamatun fi al-Naqd al-Akhlāqī li al-Ḥadāthah al-Gharbīyah* (*The Question of Ethics: A Contribution to Ethical Criticism of Western Modernity*) (Casablanca and Beirut: Al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, 2000); Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qu'ran* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980); Hassan Hanafi, *Mina al-'Aqīdah ilā a-Thawrah, III: Al-Insān al-Muta'ayyal (al-'Adl)* (*From Creed to Revolution vol. 3: The Just Man*) (Beirut and Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, 1988), and *Islam in the Modern World: Religion, Ideology, and Development*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1995).
14. Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law* (Oxford: Clarenden Press, 1965), 1.
15. In this differentiation I follow, among others, Mohammad Fadel, who distinguishes among scholastic theology, moral theology, and substantive law; how-

ever, I do not detail these differentiations here. Mohammad Fadel, "The True, the Good, and the Reasonable: The Theological and Ethical Roots of Public Reason in Islamic Law," *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence* 21, no. 1 (2008): 1-66, http://ssrn.com/abstract= 1085347.

16. "Thick sharia" is the entire scope of religious creed, worship, rituals and laws, whereas "thin sharia" refers more to the message's spirit and principles and not to the exact laws prescribed in the context of seventh-century Arabia. See Jan-Erik Lane and Hamadi Redissi, *Religion and Politics: Islam and Muslim Civilization* (Surrey and Burlinghton, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 277-83.
17. Note that *kalām* developed in difficult political times: i.e., the political first civil war, which culminated in the development of the Sunni and Shi'ah sects and several minor ones. The early reformists of the Arab Islamic Renaissance (*naḥḍa*) grew up in a similar political context: the encounter with the modern and developed West's era of colonialism. The late reformists, or contemporaries, also grew up in a special political period, that of postcolonialism, which requires the building of the state and the ensuing challenges of constructing the society's identity. European Islam is also growing up in a tense period: immigration, security issues, and international terrorism. The linkage of Islam as a religion makes the theological debate political as well. Despite the common distinction between theology and politics (mainly that one is metaphysical and the other is physical/this-worldly), they necessarily intertwine. My article has to be understood in such a politico-theological intertwining space. For a systematic analysis of the theological schools' development during early Arab-Islamic political conflicts, see Mohamed Abed Aljabri's *Naqd al-'Aql al-Rabī IV: Al-'Aql al-Siyāsī al-'Arabī* (*Critique of Arab Reason III: Arab Political Thought*) (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1990).
18. There is a tendency to see *kalām* as different from Christian theology, for it seems to include both theological and philosophical debates and is not totally synonymous with either Islamic or Christian theology. Islamic theology includes traditions like the rationalist Mu'tazila. Thus it deals not only with issues of divinity and salvation, but also with those mundane issues generally dealt with by (secular) philosophy. In other words, the *mutakallimūn* were both theologians and philosophers. In this perspective, I follow the argument of George Hourani's *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Fakhry's *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), and Mariam Al-Attar's *Islamic Ethics: Divine Command Theory in Arabo-Islamic Thought* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2010). I add here that Hourani's work is distinguished in the English-language literature on Islamic ethics, a topic that has only recently attracted more attention, although the relevant literature remains scarce. Majid Fakhry, the scholar of Islamic intellectual history, counts few such titles on the topic. He refers to Rjitse de Boer's "Ethics and Morality (Muslim)" (published in the early 1920s), D. M. Donaldson's *Studies in Muslim Ethics* (1953), George Hourani's *Islamic Rationalism* (1971), the English translation of Mohamed Ahmed Sherif's *Ghazali's Theory of Virtue*

(1974), and Constantine Zurayk's translation into English of Miskawayh's *Tahdīb al-Akhlāq* (*The Refinement of Character*, 1968). He missed Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic work that first appeared in 1959: *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (Montreal and Kingston: Mc-Gill Queen's University Press, 2002). I also add Safet Bektovic's recent work that surveys some classic and contemporary Islamic philosophers who deal with ethics at various levels, although not substantially: Bektovic, *Islamic Philosophy: Classical Problems and Modern Trends* (Copenhagen: ANIS, 2012). See the Introduction for the book's goals. Fakhry tries to categorize Islamic ethics into scriptural, theological, philosophic, and religious. Despite this work's thematic appearance, at the end he studies each scholar under one of these categories/parts. Hourani's work is a compilation of his lectures and articles; it develops some early articles and revises some of his early thoughts. He attempts to devise a more systematic categorization of the Islamic tradition. In this passage, I agree with his note on the Mu'tazila and his conclusion that there is a way to be ethically rational in Islam without an epistemological break with the divine abstract of "all knowledge." I have considered this point comparatively. A consideration of the Mu'tazila's overall contribution, the early and later reformists in light of this point, makes it relevant to understanding the current stage of Islamic thought and of European Islam in particular. In this sense, Hourani's point has been helpful, even though it was more about classical Islamic thought and was a conclusion he reached only later in his work. This point may not be fully understood if reformist scholarship is not considered, which, given the date of his work, he does not do. I think that contemporary reformist Islamic thought is moving in the direction he envisioned and recommended:

> If I had a choice of what intellectual path Muslims should follow – a choice which I do not have, looking at Islam from outside – I would start over again at the points where the early jurists and the Mu'tazilites left off, and work to develop a system of Islamic law which would openly make use of judgments of equity and public interest, and a system of ethical theology which would encourage judgments of right and wrong by the human mind, without having to look to scripture at every step. The Mu'tazilites were correct in their doctrine that we can make objective value judgments, even if their particular theory of ethics had weaknesses, which would have to be revised by modern ethical philosophers and theologians. So I think this is the best way for Muslims to revive Islam, and I wish them success in a formidable task. (Hourani, *Reason and Revelation in Islamic Ethics*, 276)

Al-Attar's moral interpretation of the Mu'tazili rationalist scholar Qadi Abdeljabbar's five tenets seem very relevant for the overall tendency of reviving and building on the heritage of the Mu'tazila in contemporary Islamic thought. Space does not allow detailing her reading of Abdeljabar's ethical theory nor its comparison with European Islamic thought.

19. Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, 11.

20. Hourani argues that *kalām* is genuinely Islamic, although it had some Greek influence. This, for him, is a plus for philosophy in general, and Islamic philosophy in particular, to reinvestigate this heritage and realize its energies now that there is a need for it in Islamic thought:

> Kalam literature […] owes little to the Greeks except in an indirect and diffuse way. It is original in Islam, and grew quite naturally out of the early theological and juristic debates among Muslims. It appears to me as chronologically the second major occurrence in history of a profound discussion on the meanings and general content of ethical concepts, the first being that of the ancient Greek sophists and Plato. If this is a sound judgment, it gives an importance to classical Islamic ethics in the general history of philosophy that has not been realized up to now. (Hourani, *Reason and Revelation in Islamic Ethics*, 21)

In his attempt to construct an Islamic philosophy of religion in *The Quran and the Secular Mind: A Philosophy of Islam* (1998), Shabbir Akhtar, like Hourani in this point, demonstrates that early *kalām* was internally stimulated, as early as the mid- and late-ninth century, before and during the early beginnings of the Abbasid intellectual era, for Muslim theologians had questions that needed to be faced. The dominant part of these questions was related to *fiqh* (law), so this early theological phase depended heavily upon the scriptures and the place of reason. Going on with Akhtar's reading of early Islamic theology and philosophy, he says that with the Abbassids' openings to the Greeks, the Muslim theologians had to defend faith using Greek reasoning, logic, and dialectics to encounter mainly the Muslim philosophers who were Greek-minded (especially al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd); he calls this phase "dialectical theology." For Akhtar, the Mu'tazila belong to this category. And seeing that Islamic philosophy did not live long enough to flourish and was criticized by Hassan al-Ash'ari (the father of the Ash'ariyah dominant school), it was later crushed by, al-Ghazali's critique among others. What remained of Islamic intellectual life was a "theological philosophy," for these dominant philosophers turned Greek secular reason into a way to prove and serve divine truths. See Shabir Akhtar, *The Quran and the Secular Mind: A Philosophy of Islam* (Oxon: Routledge, 1998), 13-22. What I mainly take from Akhtar's account is his point, which is close to Hourani's. It concerns the internal aspect of the basic ontological-epistemological questions raised by early Islamic theology.

21. Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, 11, 31.
22. Christian W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978), 307-32.
23. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934); Muhammad Khalid Masud, "Iqbal's Approach to Islamic Theology of Modernity," *Al-Hikmat* 27 (2007) 1-36; see also Iqbal's reference to "new theology" and *kalām* in his letter to Sahibzada Aftab Ahmed Khan, of the Muslim University of Aligarh, on 4 June 1925, http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/oct62/1.htm.

24. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966); *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); and *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980).
25. Rahman, *Islam*, 256.
26. Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, 154-55.
27. I take it that by Islamic ethics he means what Fakhry calls scriptural ethics. See Mohamed Arkoun, *L'Humanisme arabe du IVe/Xe siecle: Miskawayh, philosophe et historien* (*Arab Humanism in the 4th/10th Century: Miskawayh, Philosopher and Historian*) (Paris: Vrin, 1984); *Humanisme et Islam: Combats et propositions* (Humanism and Islam: Struggles and Propositions) (Paris: Vrin, 2005); Arkoun, *Islam to Reform or to Subvert?* (London: Saqi Books, 2007), 356-68.
28. See, for example, Hassan Hanafi, *Islam in the Modern World*, vols. 1 and 2 (Cairo: Anglo-Egyptian Bookshop, 1995); Ya'rib al-Marzouki, (*Falsafatu al-Dīn min Manthūr al-Fiqh al-Islāmī*) *Philosophy of Religion from an Islamic Perspective* (Beirut: Dar al-Hadi, 2006), part 1.
29. He develops his ethical approach based on three ideas: "there is no man without ethics"; "there is no ethics without religion"; "there is no man without religion." Abderrahmane, *The Question of Ethics*, 52; 147-49.
30. Mohamed Abed Aljabri, *Naqd al-'Aql al'Arabi IV: Al-'Aql al-Akhlāqī al-'Arabī – Dirāsah Tahlīlīyah Naqdīyah li Kithum al-Qiyam fī Al-Thaqāfah al-'Arabīyah* (*Critique of Arab Reason IV: Arab Ethical Reason – An Analytical and Critical Study of Value Systems in Arabic Culture*) (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 2001).
31. Hourani, *Reason and Revelation in Islamic Ethics*, 23.
32. Al-Attar, *Islamic Ethics*, 138.
33. Hourani, *Reason and Revelation in Islamic Ethics*, 23-48; 270-76. For more, see Hourani, chapters 3 and 16. In chapter 3 he works on the ontological and epistemological classification; in chapter 16 he works on the rational classification of renowned schools and philosophers of Islam. I note here that in chapter 3, he puts the Mu'tazila in the "partial rationalism" class, whereas in chapter 16 he puts them in the class of "independent reason supplemented by revelation." In light of his overall work, the Mu'tazila are rationalist. When he puts them under the "partial rationalists" label, he wants to make it clear at that stage that he distinguishes them from the Western view of rationalism, which makes no reference to the divine, whereas the Mu'tazili view does. (While they prioritize reason, they consider that revelation affirms it or at least does not contradict it. They attribute any contradictions to the methods of interpretation. This view was also endorsed by such major philosophers as al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd.)
34. Hourani, *Reason and Revelation in Islamic Ethics*, 23.
35. Ibid., 24.
36. Ibid. *Reason* is meant its general sense, which covers thinking that is naturalist, empiricist, or intuitive at times. Hourani says that Qur'an calls for the use of reason but does not specify which kind of reason exactly. So, he takes it to mean

a judgment reached by experience or experiment without necessary recourse to the scriptures.

37. Ibid., 24-25. In chapter 16, he labels one class as revelation as supported by imams. Here he includes the Shi'ah, who believe in the Imam's infallibility. They can be categorized in the traditional tendency, which makes revelation (or the Imam) the source of ethical values. Chapter 16, 270-76.
38. Hourani, *Reason and Revelation in Islamic Ethics*, 276. The Mu'tazila do not comprise one harmonious rationalist school that is free of difference.
39. Ibid., 37.
40. Ibid.
41. Albert Hourani, in David Johnson, "A Turn in the Epistemology and Hermeneutics of Twentieth Century *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*," *Islamic Law and Society* 11, no. 2 (2004): 243.
42. Watt says that nineteenth-century occidental scholars were attracted to the Mu'tazila school because it seemed close to contemporary liberalism and seemed to place reason above revelation. He adds: "Had Mu'tazilite ideas become dominant in the Islamic world, the cleavage between Muslims and Christians might have been far less, it was felt." Montgomery Watt, *The Formative Period of Islamic Thought* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 232.
43. Richard Martin, et al., eds., *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Mu'tazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), 11.
44. Here, various types of reasons and ethics emerge. For example, Abderrahmane divides rational ability into the rationalities of abstraction, living experience, and Sophist belief. These match abstract reason (limited to the description of things), guided reason (devoted to doing things), and supported reason (represents the capability of knowing its internal identity). This latter type of reason is referred to as expanded reason in Abdurrahmane, *Al-'Amal al-Dīnī wa Tajdīd al-'Aql* (*Religious Practice and the Renewal of Reason*) (Casablanca and Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, 1989), 121.
45. "The inquisition instituted by Caliph al-Ma'mun in 833 and lasted until 850, in which state-appointed religious authorities, such as *qadi*s, were required to subscribe to al-Ma'mun's view that the Qur'an was created or be imprisoned." Richard Martin, et al., eds., *Defenders of Reason in Islam*, 233.
46. Albert Hourani, *Arab Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). The so-called classical Islam refers to the scholarship written between the seventh and fifteenth centuries.
47. Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1998) x, 19, 246.
48. He develops this argument with examples in his I*slam and the Cultural Accommodation of Social Change* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990); *Islam between Culture and Politics* (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave and Weatherhead Center for International Affairs Harvard University, 2001); and *Political Islam, World Politics and Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

49. Tibi's cultural modernity is what I refer to as Euro-modernity. Although he generally claims that modernity values are European, he sometimes says that the "cultural roots of modernity existed in Islamic thought." *Islam's Predicament with Cultural Modernity: Religious Reform and Cultural Change* (New York and London: Routledge, 2009) 7.
50. Tibi's reformist agenda is mostly expressed in his *Islam's Predicament with Modernity,* a work that, in his own words, summarizes his four decades of scholarship.
51. See, for instance, As'ad Abu Khalil, "Review of Tibi's The Challenge of Fundamentalism (1998)," *The International History Review* 21, no. 3 (September 1999), 841-43.
53. Tibi, *Islam's Predicament with Modernity*, 308-10, 262.
53. The chronological appearance of their discourses has to be borne in mind. Tibi coined Euro-Islam in 1992; Ramadan's work that uses European Islam came out in 1999, although he had already entered the debate and first wrote on Islam and *laïcité* in 1994. Tibi suspects Ramadan's project, which he considers fundamentalist in tendency and seeks the Islamization of Europe: "Les conditions d'un'euro-islam'" ("The Conditions of a 'Euro-Islam'"), in Robert Bistolfiand Francois Zabbal, eds., *Islams d'Europe: integration ou insertion communautaire?* (*Islams of Europe: Integration or Communitarian Insertion?*) (Paris: L'Aube, 1995), 230-34; Ramadan, *Les musulmans dans la laïcité* (*Muslims in Laïcité*) (Lyon: Tawhid, 1994), and *To Be a European Muslim: A Study of Islamic Sources in the European Context* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1999).
54. Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
55. Ramadan, *Aux sources des renouvea musulman: d'al Afghani à Hassan al-Banna* (*To the Sources of Islamic Revival: From al-Afghani to Hassan al-Banna*) (Paris: Bayard Editions, 1998).
56. Ramadan, *Islam, the West, and the Challenges of Modernity* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2001).
57. Caroline Fourest, *Brother Tariq: The Double Speak of Tariq Ramadan*, trans. I. Wieder & J. Atherton (New York: Encounter Books, 2008).
58. Ramadan, *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
59. Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
60. This definition is classic, and the term "the way" is known more among the Sufis. What renders it new in Ramadan's project is the context, and the other concepts that go with it.
61. Despite such a move in Ramadan's thought, his view that the Qur'an should not be read as a human text because it is God's eternal word may contradict his consideration of the universe as a Second Book of Revelation. How can he explain his view of a God who reveals an eternal Word/Book that complements a changing universe ruled by human beings equally, since the First Book's prescribed

laws may no longer be valid in front of the changing laws of Man in the Second Book? Ramadan could find it difficult if he thinks of going into theological debates about God's attributes. That is one of the challenges he should consider if he seeks to develop his project further; otherwise, his readers will have to take charge of that in the light of his various notes here and there, which are generally not deep enough on that level. I bracket this note here.

62. See Leila Babes and Tareq Oubrou, *Loi d'Allah, loi des hommes: liberté, égalité et femmes en islam* (*Law of God, Law of Man: Liberty, Equality, and Women in Islam*) (Paris: Albin Michel, Coll. Spiritualités, 2002); Tareq Oubrou, *Profession imam* (*Profession Imam*), interview with Michaël Privot and Cédriq Baylocq (Paris: Albin Michel, Coll. Spiritualités, 2009). Similar views voiced in *Profession imam* are expressed with updates in this recent work: Tareq Oubrou, *Un imam en colère: intégration, laïcité, violences* (*An Imam in Anger: Integration, Laïcité, Violence*), interview with Samuel Lieven (Paris: Bayard Press, 2012); Cédric Baylocq and Michael Privot, "Islam & Critical Thought: An Interview with the French Imâm and Theologian Tareq Oubrou," 24 March 2013, available at: http://iqbal.hypotheses.org/842 . This forthcoming paper critically synthesizes his overall views: Mohammed Hashas, "Tareq Oubrou's Geotheology: Shari'ah of the Minority and the Secularization of Islamic Theology in the European Context," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 34, no. 4 (2014): 1-25; the pagination is subject to change.
63. Oubrou, *Profession Imam*, 157.
64. Ibid., 129-32.
65. Oubrou, "Introduction théorique à la charia de minorité" ("Theoretical Introduction to Sharia of the Minority") in *Islam de France*, n. 2 (1998) 27-41, made available online on 25 August 2000, at http://oumma.com/Introduction-theorique-a-la-chari.
66. Babes and Oubrou, *Loi d'Allah*, 95.
67. Oubrou, *Profession Imam*, 280.
68. Mohammed Hashas, "Reading Abdennour Bidar: New Pathways for European Islamic Thought," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 2 (2013): 45-76.
69. Ibid., n. 1, 46; n. 85, 64.
70. He expresses this idea in his first two books: *Bidar, Un Islam pour notre temps* (*An Islam for Our Times*) (Paris, Editions du Seuil, 2004); *Self islam: histoire d'un islam personnel* (*Self Islam: A Story of Personal Islam*) (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2006).
71. Unlike atheism or spirituality without God, his conception of the world is theosophic, as opposed to nihilist or anti-revelation, for it calls for vivid and dynamic involvement in the world without expecting any hereafter. *Bidar, L'islam sans soumission: pour un existentialisme musulman* (*Islam without Submission: For an Islamic Existentialism*) (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008).
72. Bidar, *Self Islam*, 82.
73. For this intellectual stage, see his *Comment sortir de la religion*, op. cit., 2012. The same idea is generally developed from his work on Mohamed Iqbal: *L'islam*

face à la mort de Dieu: Actualité de Mohammed Iqbal (*Islam Face to Face with the Death of God: Mohammad Iqbal Revisited*) (Paris: Editions François Bourin, 2010). The concept of spiritual modernity is Taha Abderrahmane's, as developed in his *Rūḥ al-Ḥadāthah: Nahwa al-Ta'sīs li Ḥadāthah Islāmīyah* (*The Spirit of Modernity: An Introduction to Founding an Islamic Modernity*) (Casablanca and Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, 2006), 58.

74. I have insisted in this paper that this European Islam has much in common with contemporary reformist Islamic thought. On this particular aspect, I refer to Taha Abderrahmane's works like *The Question of Ethics*; *Rūḥ al-Ḥadāthah: Nahwa al-Ta'sīs li Ḥadāthah Islāmīyah*; *Rūḥ al-'Amal* (The Question of Practice) (Casablanca and Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, 2012); and *Rūḥ al-Dīn* (*The Spirit of Religion*) (Beirut and Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, 2012).
75. Hashas, "Reading Abdennour Bidar," n. 85, 64.
76. Ramadan, *Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity*, 204-07.
77. Bidar, *Overcoming Religion*, 122.
78. Contemporary reformists, among them the ones cited in this paper, deal with ethics in different ways. For example, the ethicist Taha Abderrahmane's project remains remarkable. I referred earlier to some of his works on the spirit of religion, the spirit of modernity, ethics, reason, and the question of doing (practice). His classification of reason and ethics into three categories, as well as his equation of revelation-reason-ethics-and-practice, challenges both classical Islamic thought and contemporary European secular definitions of those concepts. My forthcoming papers will introduce his overall work and concepts, and only then will a clearer comparison and further understanding and critique of this European Islam be presented. This paper is part of a larger project in progress.
Abderrahmane's project of spiritual modernity/Islamic modernity started substantially as a reaction to and a critique of Aljabri's synthesis of the Islamic tradition, following the Averroest rational spirit that he (Aljabri) considers the harbinger of European secular and liberal thought (see note 11). Beyond these two major trends in contemporary Islamic thought, the work of the Iranian philosopher Abdolkarim Soroush is the most radical. See M. Hashas, "Abdolkarim Soroush: The Neo-Muʿtazilite that Buries Classical Islamic Political Theology in Defence of Religious Democracy and Pluralism," *Studia Islamica* 109 (2014): 1-27. Most (if not all) of these reformist trends claim belonging to the Islamic tradition. Their defence, for instance, of individual libery in modern terms, and spiritual and ethical responsibility, is made with reference to the classical debates on free will. Their defence of equality is mainly done with reference to the ontological equality of all human beings before the Creator; their difference is based on their acts (practice), whether good or bad. A further example is that of reason and how it flourished with Islamic scholarship, theologically as well as scientifically (linguistics, hermeneutics, geography, maths, physics, astrology, etc.). This does not mean that they say modernity, as understood now, is found in the classical heritage, but that the Islamic tradition was able to debate

and be creative and can reclaim that ability from historical evidence. That is why quickly saying that contemporary Islamic thought is mimetic of Western modernity and is following the path the Catholic Church, for instance, does not hold. While there are clear similarities on the practical level (politically), theoretically, historical evidence can demonstrate, as these scholars claim, substantial differences, as is the case with concepts like humanity, dignity, liberty, fraternity, ethics, and social justice. Jumping to the idea that contemporary Islamic thought is homogeneous or monist, or that it is a duplicate of modern Western thought, does incredible harm both to the idea of liberty (claimed by the modern West as one of its distinguishing values) and to the Islamic tradition (deprived of the right to differ or not to differ). Otherwise said, contemporary Islamic thought (e.g., European Islam), is revisiting its epistemological traditional background, to accommodate the modern world, without a radical ontological break with the divine, which Western thought in general has gone through. This tendency then opens up new horizons on spiritual modernity, to use Abderrahmane's term, which is not a Western modernity in disguise, although they may have a lot in common. These similarities and differences have yet to be seriously researched, away from polemical discourses that are fundamentally superficial, illiberal, undemocratic, and non-pluralist.

79. Especially in Western Europe and North America, bringing Kantian moral philosophy in touch with this Islamic trend could be a very interesting scholarly endeavor (Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, ed. Peter Heath and J. B. Schneewind, trans. Peter Heath [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997]). For the intra-Islamic debate on ethics, see, for instance, note 78 above. The point to retain here is that the epistemological revisions being experiened by European Islam may develop into different projects that revolve around the ontological human bond with the divine that is equally revisited but not violently torn apart. This means that various interpretations of ethics, reason, politics, among other concepts, will develop. "Epistemological pluralism," to borrow Soroush's term, will be the major trait of this emerging Islamic thought. If Islamic prolific medieval times experienced high theological-philosophical diversity but allowed only for one scholarly tendency to develop because of political influence from above, modern times characterized by human acculturation and social multiculturalism, nurtured by strong individual liberty and democratic public debate, will allow this reclaimed and revisited/reformed diversity "within" to flourish and interact with other views, inside and outside its traditional scope. Soroush, *The Expansion of Prophetic Experience: Essays on Historicity, Contingency and Plurality in Religion*, trans., Nilou Mobasser, ed., Forough Jahanbakhsh (Leiden: Brill, 2009),152; 160-61.
80. About other versions of European Islam, see note 5 above.