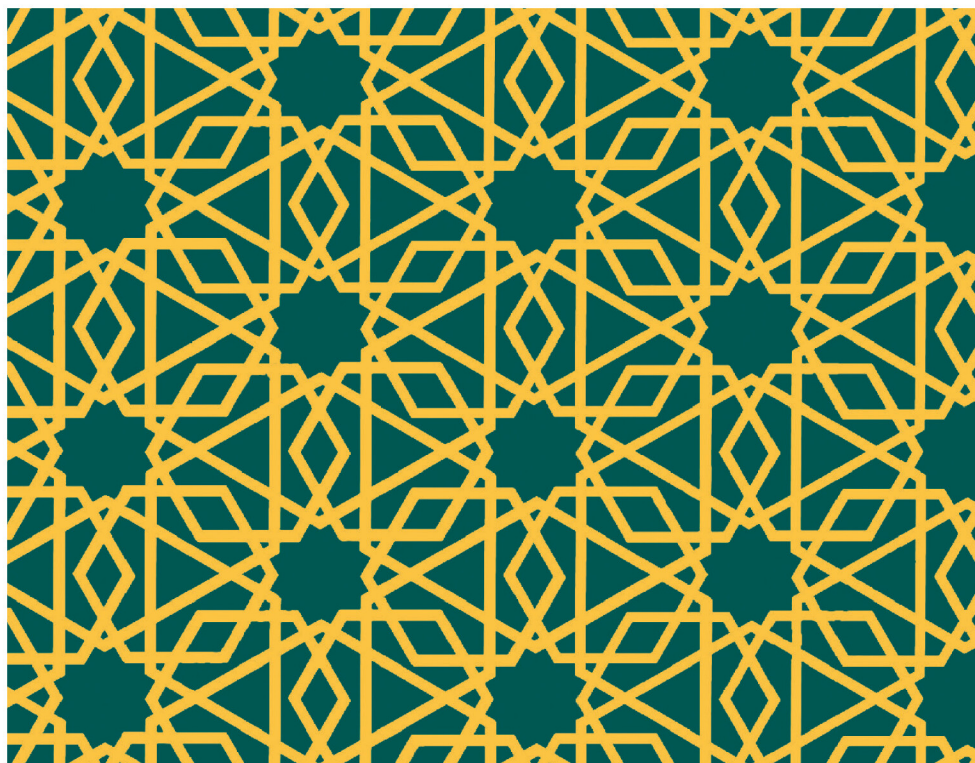


MODERN INTELLECTUAL TRENDS | 01



Dialogues for the Future

Taha Abderrahmane

Translated by

Abdellah El Boubekri

BRILL

Dialogues for the Future

Modern Intellectual Trends

THE MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA AND ASIA

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Foreword: Translation for an Open World

For Taha,¹ *Dialogues for the Future*



It is always a challenge to introduce a philosopher from one language to another, and from one tradition to another, especially if these languages and traditions have overlapped for centuries. Translation has been the means through which human intellectual traditions communicate and exchange worldviews to build these intertwining territories in which words, concepts, and ideas travel from one context to another. If philosophers expand our understanding of human nature and the universe and in so doing expand our ability as humans to communicate with and understand one another, translators are an asset for both the human and cultural traditions that build new ideas and the traditions that receive them.

Translators are not traitors, as the saying goes; rather, they are “treaters” (i.e., negotiators) of human misunderstandings and bridge-builders among different traditions. Translation is itself a worldview that examines at least two traditions at the same time from the edge, which is both difficult and rewarding. The edge of a “mindscape” or “landscape” empowers the “word-scape” and rejuvenates it. Translation from one language to another requires a profound understanding of the nuances in the two languages, and the nuances reflect different ways of looking at the world. Moreover, each language has its own internal dynamics and logic. However, the plurality of words and concepts found in each language means that this logic is not stable; it is dynamic and changes as humans and their circumstances change. Nevertheless, it is in these dynamics that a language finds echoes and similarities of its logic in another language, however closely or distantly related it is to the other language. Human reason is one, but human rational and emotional capacities change over time, owing to different social, cultural, religious, political, economic, and natural circumstances. Human diversity is the result of these

1 While all his books are published with his name in this order “Taha Abderrahmane,” it should be noted that his family name is Taha, and Abderrahmane is his first name. This is why writings about him in Arabic repeat his family name, Taha, and refer to his philosophy as “Taha’ian.” This convention is followed here to avoid any possible confusion.

differences, which philosophy tries to overcome to reach the natural way of human thinking and being. The multiplicity of languages and traditions has given rise to a multiplicity of philosophies. Some languages and traditions have become content with their own internal dynamics and have broadly, but not fully, closed the door to other traditions. The idea that modern “Western” philosophy is Eurocentric is only partially true; each philosophical tradition carries within it different schools and interpretations which come from different traditions, consciously or unconsciously, whether this is admitted or not. There is no philosophy that develops in a vacuum. The role of translation in the field of philosophical production, as is the case here, is to show that philosophies in fact mingle with, interact with, and nurture one another. Of course, they must criticise one other, otherwise, they cannot be philosophies, for the essence of philosophy is conversation, in the sense of direct or indirect debate, and critique. The original translator must be aware of this to bridge the gaps as much as possible. The ancient Greeks and Arabs were aware of these issues, and they discussed them in classical treatises, as early modern Europeans and contemporary scholars of Translation Studies worldwide have likewise done.

The Moroccan philosopher Taha Abderrahmane (b. 1944) paid careful attention to language and translation in his early career as a philosopher. He began as a logician and wrote on the philosophy of language and on the philosophy of translation. Since then, he has developed an entire linguistic dictionary of his own, which no contemporary peer has done. He has innovated the philosophical dictionary of the Arabic language on the basis of his moralistic worldview and, what I have called since 2015, his “trusteeship paradigm” in which he expansively details his modern ethical theory, not only for Arab and Islamic societies but also for modern human societies as a whole, which is based on his reading of the philosophical message of Islam as a message of ethics and well-being for all humanity.

Taha Abderrahmane has emerged on the global scene during the last decade, though his participation in prominent Arab and Islamic scholarly circles goes back to the late 1980s and early 1990s. My familiarity with his work dates to the early 2000s, when I began studying in the English Department at Mohammed I University in Oujda, Morocco. It was difficult for me to read and understand him then, and I would not fully comprehend his project until ten years later during the course of my studies and research in Western Europe. When I mapped the anthologies of contemporary Arab and Islamic thought produced by prominent scholars of Islam in the “West” I did not see Taha Abderrahmane among them. I assumed this was owing to either wilful neglect of an important philosophical project or simply ignorance of contemporary intel-

lectual developments in the Arabic-speaking world. This discovery coincided with my realisation that Taha Abderrahmane's project is fundamental to modern Arab philosophy and Islamic critical thinking. Not only has he contributed to Arab philosophical creativity, he has also helped open up Islamic thinking to modern philosophies while remaining grounded in an Islamic ethos. He believes that Arab philosophy has suffered from serious intellectual stagnation for centuries and that it is high time it overcame this stagnation and joined the global intellectual milieu, in accordance with its own concepts and worldview(s). He also contends that Islamic thinking must overcome its rigid legal focus and concentrate instead on developing humanist ethics that are more accommodating. His thinking in this regard (as well as regarding his other concepts) is based on the Qur'ānic language and Arabic classics. While he does engage with the ancient philosophical texts of the Greeks and Arabs (Arabs in the cultural, rather than ethnic, sense, i.e., the producers of knowledge in Arabic, which included many different ethnicities and religions within "Islamicate" civilization), he is especially keen to engage with major modern and contemporary philosophers of Europe and North America. He is not content with exploring only the history of ideas, as many of his contemporaries are, nor is he content with simply reading and translating major contemporary philosophers. Instead, he evaluates contemporary philosophical theories with the aim of encouraging the modern, globalised world to respect human diversity by honouring particularities. This accords with his belief that universalism must start at the local level and that if the universal alone is emphasised in philosophical thought, it will only serve global political and economic hegemons. He believes that philosophy ought to free human beings and not imprison them in one mainstream mindscape. Taha Abderrahmane may seem Arabocentrist or Islamocentrist in response to Eurocentrism or Judeo-Christian centrisms; however, the aim of his criticism is not to antagonise but to push modern human reason to be more pluralist and more accommodative regarding diversity, modernities, and philosophies. He ultimately champions the ideas of a global society and a forthcoming civilisation with a pluralistic ethos.

Because Taha Abderrahmane's philosophical corpus is vast and not easy to translate (i.e., in the sense of linguistic, rather than intellectual, translation), this book, *Dialogues for the Future*, originally published in 2003, serves as a good introduction to the ideas of this major philosopher, as it is comprised primarily of interviews with him conducted by academics from philosophy departments. Abdellah El Boubekri, who teaches Translation Studies and is thus well aware of the complexities of translation, has performed a great service in bringing this book to the English-speaking world—a worthy endeavour in an era when trans-

lations of Arab philosophy into other languages—unlike during the Middle Ages, when Arab philosophy was translated into other languages—has languished.

Mohammed Hashas

Luiss University, Rome, 19 July 2022

Translator's Note

Taha Abderrahmane published *Ḥiwārāt min ajl al-mustaqbal* [*Dialogues for the Future*] in 2003. The book consists of interviews and dialogues with Taha that were broadcast or featured in different media outlets and shed light on all his academic and philosophical interests and contributions since the 1970s.

Taha's peculiar use of Arabic presented the translator of the present book with two daunting challenges: to render the intricacies of Taha's lexicon, unusual syntactical constructions, wordplay, and coinage of new terminology into comprehensible English while preserving his uncommon use of the Arabic language, as this is considered part and parcel of his intellectual project. For this reason, the translator had to alternate between the source-oriented and target-oriented approaches to translation to resolve these challenges. That is, he had to strike a balance between basing translation sometimes on the norms of the original source text and other times on the norms of the target text and culture. The translator used the source-oriented approach whenever textual and formal equivalence could be established between Arabic and English. When the writer's propensity for creating innovative Arabic expressions and words made this equivalence impossible, however, the translator resorted to a target-oriented approach, marked by the functionalist method of translation, to render oblique semantic constructions and pragmatic expressions and locutions intelligible for an English-language audience. As it happens, such an eclectic procedure aligns with Taha's view of what constitutes living translation, i.e., a translation that is not made dumb or blind by undue reliance on and replication of the original text.

This translated text sometimes uses lexical items and concepts interchangeably to convey Taha's eccentric approach to language. For example, "the mind" is used as a synonym of "reason", when the intended meaning is the mental and logical abilities. Likewise, "heritage" and "tradition" can denote the same entity, although "tradition" recurs more often to match its frequency in philosophical essays and books. By the same token, "morals" and "ethics" are meant to refer to the general distinction between what is properly right and wrong, regardless of their loosely distinguished connotation with the personal normative domain (morals) and public standard sphere (ethics). Furthermore, this translation preserves the prevalent use of the pronoun "he" to refer to Man in the sense of "humankind" in the original text. As it is customary in the Arabic language to use "he" to indicate the person, regardless of sex, the translator has chosen, out of faithfulness to this usage, to retain this pronoun throughout, though readers may interpret his use of the pronoun "he" as a

form of gender bias against women and may argue that Taha reflects a sexist and patriarchal culture.

Lastly, since the original text refers to many Arabic words, as well as Arab scholars, writers, and philosophers whose names may not be familiar to Western readers, the translator has transliterated these names and words, following the system used in Brill's *Encyclopedia of Islam* 3rd ed.

Consonants ʾ, b, t, th, j, ḥ, kh, d, dh, r, z, s, sh, ṣ, ḍ, ṭ, z, ʿ, gh, f, q, k, l, m, n, h, w, y.

Short vowels a, i, u.

Long vowels ā, ī, ū.

Diphthongs aw, ay.

Tā' marbūṭa -a, -at (construct state).

Common names that first appeared in French scholarly literature and publications are kept in their French spelling. For example, Taha Abderrahmane, Abdellah Laroui, and Mohammed al-Jabri are not transliterated; all other names, such as those of Taha's interviewers, are transliterated.

Abdellah El Boubekri

General Introduction: On Dialogue, Ethics, and Traditions

Abdellah El Boubekri

Taha Abderrahmane is a prolific contemporary philosopher in the Arab-Islamic world. His œuvre reflects his mastery of a wide range of philosophical traditions and intellectual streams. Moreover, his thorough knowledge of Islamic theology (*ilm al-kalām*), Sharia (Islamic law), Sufism (*taṣawwuf*), logic, linguistics, philology, the history of both Muslim and Western epistemological thought, as well as his remarkable command of classical and modern languages, has turned his intellectual project into distinct dialogic foci for scholars interested in the open canvas of intellectual dialogue.

During the last five decades, his writings (roughly 25 books, as of 2019) on Islamic philosophy, logic, language, and ethics, to name just a few major disciplines, have contributed significantly to shaping a local intellectual identity for Arab-Islamic scholarship. The thought of this intellectual identity is nurtured by authentic tradition and reinvigorates itself through conscious interactions with the dominant Western epistemological and ontological inheritances. This has required that he develop a spirit of scholarly and logical multiplicity whereby Western philosophical paradigms and academic essentialist categories, the standard models for many, if not most, Arab-Islamic thinkers, are pluralised. It is therefore not surprising that modernity and reason, for example, often appear as “modernities” and “reasons” in his writings, and this explains the use of the plural forms for the concepts constituting the chapters of this translated book: “Traditions”, “Philosophies”, “Logics”, “Linguistics”, “Translations”, “Averroisms”, “Sufisms”, “Fundamentalisms”, “Globalisations”.

The purpose of this general introduction is to contextualise the present translated book, *Dialogues for the Future*, within the entire intellectual project of Taha Abderrahmane so that English-speaking readers may understand the book’s multiple thematic interests and scholarly orientations. There are three reasons behind the selection of this piece of writing for translation. Firstly, there is a remarkable lack of Taha’s writings available in English, as he writes mostly in Arabic, apart from the theses he wrote in French while at university in France. Secondly, this translation is intended to represent Taha’s entire intellectual perspective up to 2005, summarising his long philosophical journey. Thirdly, Taha has introduced a novel way of approaching certain timely matters,

rather than simply repeating the usual long-established Western philosophical views. Moreover, this book offers a new perspective on various thorny questions related to tradition, philosophy, modernity, linguistics, and other related topics, that is not directly determined by the Western epistemic and ontological framework.

To begin with, Taha's intellectual project cannot be understood solely on the basis of his biographical circumstances, despite their considerable influence in shaping his views. He was born in El Jadida in 1944 and pursued his secondary education in Casablanca. After he completed his higher education at the Sorbonne in Paris, he returned to teach logic and philosophy of language, with an admixture of Sufism, at Mohammed v University in Rabat, where he had previously completed his graduate studies in philosophy. Given the predominance of liberal and left-wing ideological currents at Moroccan universities in the 1970s and 1980s, Taha was considered an anomaly, and his ideas received no serious consideration.¹ This only made him more determined to organize and explain his dormant thought during the 1990s. To accomplish this, he drew heavily on his training in semiotics and logic acquired during his studies in Paris as well as his extensive knowledge of philosophers of the Enlightenment and modernity and the reformist thought in North Africa and Arab-Islamic literature that led to the rise of the Arab renaissance (*nahḍa*) in Egypt (as well as Greater Syria and the Middle East in general) to sketch the primary outlines of his reformist project.²

From this complex scholarly trajectory, Taha was able to set the stage for dialogue between the Islamic tradition and Western modernity by delving deeper into problematic issues related to tradition (*turāth*), modernity, Sufism, ethics, politics, religion, linguistics, globalisation, and civilisation. These concerns constitute the central nerve of his reformist philosophy, and the following paragraphs will attempt to bring readers closer to the contents of this philosophy.

In his approach to the question of tradition, Taha emphasises the concept of inversion (*taqlīb*). In the context of his advocating the adoption of an inversion of European philosophical paradigms, his reformist project is based on an inversion and reversal of the thinking habits that predominate among some

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- 1 It is worth mentioning in this regard that in the conclusion of his first doctoral dissertation in 1972, Taha roundly attacked the existentialism and leftist thought that prevailed among Arab intellectuals. His dissertation was later published as *Langage et philosophie: essai sur les structures linguistiques de l'ontologie* (Rabat: Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines, 1979).
 - 2 Wael Hallaq claims that reformist thought in North Africa "is characteristically secularist and markedly Eurocentric, tending arbitrarily to marginalise, if not disparage, the Islamic traditions" (Hallaq 2019, 38).

Arab Muslim scholars influenced by the Western tradition. One of whom, Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, is famous for his classification of the Arab reasoning system into three paradigmatic categories: demonstration (*burhān*), rhetoric (*bayān*), and mysticism (*ʿirfān*).³ For Taha, this triadic scheme is grounded in a denuded and instrumentalist reason since it did not evolve out of the essential attributes of the Arab-Islamic tradition and its cultural specificity. Al-Jabri calls for retaining the demonstrative heritage as championed by Averroes (*Ibn Rushd*) for its role in influencing the European Renaissance; as for mystical knowledge, al-Jabri recommends rejecting it because of its association with irrational and mythical thinking.

In contrast to al-Jabri's triadic constellations of reason, Taha suggests the tripartition of reason into (1) "abstract reasoning" (*al-ʿaql al-mujarrad*), which is inspired by Greek philosophy and adopted by speculative theologians (*mutakallimūn*) in what they refer to as *nazar* (speculative reasoning); (2) "guided reasoning" (*al-ʿaql al-musaddad*), popularly used by Muslim jurists (*faqīh*), and, since it is strictly practical and stronger in obedience to the prophet and the commandments of religion, it is seen as superior to speculative theology and as a fundamental source of Islamic law; (3) "supported reasoning" (*al-ʿaql al-muʿayyad*) is said to be the most important and is strictly related to purification of the self and realisation of the state of perfection and morality. While al-Jabri perceives abstract reasoning (the demonstrative) as the antidote to the intellectual crisis that afflicts Arab-Islamic thought, Taha invertedly imagines the solution in the arena of supported reasoning.⁴ He argues for preserving a kind

3 These categories are translated in different ways. The translation opted for in this introduction combines the terms used by Hashas and Hallaq. Thus, "demonstrative thinking" refers to the philosophical/argumentative-rational (*burhānī*) tradition; "rhetorical thinking" amounts to the hermeneutical/legal/linguistic (*bayānī*) tradition; "gnostic thinking" captures the mystical/Sufi (*ʿirfānī*) tradition. Hashas (2020, 13) uses these translations: rhetorical (*bayānī*), gnostic (*ʿirfānī*), argumentative-rational (*burhānī*); Hallaq (2019, 18) adopts these translations: hermeneutics (*bayān*), gnosis (*ʿirfān*), and demonstration (*burhān*), (for more details on the meanings of (*bayān*) and (*ʿirfān*) see Hallaq 2019, endnotes, 284–285).

4 Taha's intellectual works cannot be fully understood without underscoring their embedding in the praxis and theory of Sufism. He belongs to the Būdshīshīyya *zāwiya*, one of the dominant Sufi orders in Morocco, which is strongly supported and sponsored by the monarchical regime for political reasons. Farid Suleiman (2021, 44) explains, "The Budshishīyya serves the regime as a tool for sustaining political equilibrium in Morocco, and as a bulwark against the dissemination and influence of oppositional groups, such as the Jamāʿat al-ʿAdl wa-l-Ihsān, (AWI; the Justice and Charity Movement), and violent ideologies, such as militant Salafism." In *Bu's al-dahrānīyya (The Misery of Secularism)*, Taha asserts that the purification of the self (*tazkiya*) constitutes the pillar of his philosophical project since *tazkiya* is the means for humans to "discipline the ego in order to attain the divinely revealed moral values and

of gnostic reason that is enhanced by the mystic Sufi worldview and approach of *turāth*. Rather than attributing reasoning to the cognitive faculty, he believes that “reasoning is an inner sensory or perceptive act that arises from the human heart” (Suleiman 2021, 52). This sort of inversion is at the heart of his innovative look at the Islamic tradition; it rebuts the ideologies of secularism, materialism, and global capitalism that derive sustenance directly from abstract reasoning.

Taha does not believe that the defect in the Arab-Islamic tradition is intrinsic as much as it is caused by unscrutinised interference of external forces in the form of Western hegemonic thinking paradigms. Unlike the previous reformists as well as his contemporaries, he perceives the remedy to the Arab-Islamic intellectual predicament to be found in the reconnection, rather than rupture, with the Islamic tradition. The crisis for him, Hallaq explains, is to “be located in the West, in the way Euro-America has put the universal and presumably trans-historical principles of modernity into skewed practice. The “skewing” occurs at the moment in which man installs himself as lord over creation, engaging in a self-divination that reifies him as an end to himself” (Hallaq 2019, 257).

Therefore, Taha is not at ease with some North African reformists such as Mohammed Arkoun and al-Jabri who claimed to rationalise the traditional text for the purpose of renewing it after a hurried and fragmentary analysis of its content. Taha stresses the necessity of a full understanding of the content of the traditional text along with the method it used to arrive at its conclusion; only after the command of the content and its methods, is it possible to practice appropriate working methods in line with the spirit of the tradition and the requirements of our time. In other words, modernising Islam using external concepts, borrowed methods, and theoretical foundations will be more harmful than beneficial. Taha argues for the need to derive these methods from the tradition itself.

The leading constituents of this tradition are belief, language, and knowledge, which should be seen as complementarily and holistically interrelated and practically derived from *turāth* rather than taking the Modern Western epistemology as a model. Instead of being submitted to eclectic and selective appropriation, they should be considered in their totality, for, Hallaq argues, “There can be no genuine or correct way to evaluate tradition without the full recognition that interpenetration and interdependency are among its most salient features” (2019, 69). For example, in their de-historicist movement, some Muslim thinkers believe that tradition consists of separate entities; they

spiritual meanings” (Abderrahmane 2014, 16). This *tazkiya* is superior to the promotions and blessings gained through modern technological and material advances.

choose only the entities that are assumed to be coherent with the requirements of European rationality and reject the parts of tradition that seem incompatible with their political views, be they foundationalist, Salafist, nationalist, or otherwise.

While expressing his dissatisfaction with venerated Western “abstract” reasoning that is not open to other languages and cultures, Taha introduces the concept of the “discursive field” (*al-majāl al-tadāwulī*).⁵ Philosophy, for him, cannot be excised from the discursive field in which it practically operates and gradually evolves.⁶ To follow and imitate Greek abstract reasoning and its discursive field (which results in incohesive ingenuity, *ibdāʿ maḥṣūl*) is tantamount to neglecting the local specificity of the discursive field (*khuṣūṣiyya tadāwulīyya*) in which the philosophy operates and which he labels as cohesive ingenuity (*ibdāʿ maḥṣūl*). This does not suggest that Islamic philosophy does not recognise the significance of dialogue or should function in separation from all external influences. Instead, he contends that Muslim philosophers should base their imported heritage on their linguistic and theological values which have their specific discursive field. This will help them avoid the inferiority complex that usually arises when the specificity of the discursive field is disregarded. The realisation of this philosophical proactivity (*mubādara falsafīyya*), which posits that Islam has a universal message that is suitable for all times, will sustain innovation in addressing new issues that are not dealt with by an imported tradition.

Therefore, Taha does not exclude the possibility of interaction with imported European sciences. An example of this is juristic science (i.e., *uṣūl al-fiqh*), which appropriates components from Aristotelian logic, while “the commanding epistemology and hermeneutical constitution of this science remained uniquely *sharʿī*, and thus native to the tradition” (Hallaq 2019, 46). This is in stark opposition to the works of the reformists who employed this logic verbatim, the outcome of which was a transplanted science. A salient illustration of this foreignisation of tradition is the commentaries that Averroes composed

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- 5 In *Tajdīd al-manhaj fī taqwīm al-turāth* (*Renewing the Method to Assess Tradition*, 1994), Taha defines the concept of “discursive field” as the components of a certain body of knowledge or science as shared by a section of society at a certain time. This includes their language, social worldviews, and political-religious beliefs. This shared knowledge constitutes part of the embedding culture.
- 6 In *Suʿāl al-ʿamal: Baḥth ʿan al-uṣūl al-ʿamalīyya li-l-fikr wa-l-ilm* (*The Question of Doing: A Search for Practical Origins in Thought and Science*, 2012), Taha explains that the components forming the discursive field of a certain section of society, which makes a part of a culture, are characterised by their practical and operative outcome, gradual evolvement, historicity, and potential for philosophical creativity.

on Aristotle's metaphysics; their foreignising effects were clearly translated in the works of al-Jabri and Arkoun, the targets of much of Taha's critiques.

Equally, Taha seems more supportive of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (as well as Ibn Ḥazm), who made Aristotelian logic comport with the argumentative structure of "*uṣūl al-fiqh*" and less supportive of Ibn Taymiyya,⁷ who tended to discard Aristotle's syllogistic logic and consider it as an irrelevant methodology for "the practical dictates of *Sharī'a* principles" (Hallaq 2019, 51). In short, Taha is not against the interpenetration (*tadākhul*) of external/foreign sciences (namely, Greek, Persian, or Indian) with internal/indigenous sciences as long as there is no intention for blind and unverified borrowings, and provided that the central and peripheral elements of tradition are not confused. The "most perfect archetype of internal interpenetration," Hallaq maintains, is found in the legal theory of *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* (objectives of Islamic law) of Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī, "whereas its external exemplary counterpart is found in the metaphysics of Ibn Rushd" (Hallaq 2019, 69).⁸

Taha calls for espousing a critique that is independent of the Western hegemonic mode of knowledge. This can be realised only when Arab-Muslim intellectuals cease to emulate the methods of critique dictated to them. The concept of reason, for instance, is incapable of understanding the entirety of existence because it is only a part of it, and the part can never comprehend the whole. In *Rūḥ al-ḥadātha* (*The Spirit of Modernity*), Taha illustrates the inability of Western reason to comprehend the entire universe. Western materialist thought is premised on the alleged human control of nature, and yet reality proves that humans are only one part of nature whose forces can never be submissive to human wishes. By contrast, in "Islamic modernity", as he sometimes calls it,

7 Muḥammad Ibn Taymiyya was born in 1263 in Harran, Mesopotamia, and died 26 September 1328 in Damascus, Syria. He is considered one of the influential Islamic theologians who belonged to the Ḥanbali school. He is famous for his strident call to depend on the two exclusive sources of Islamic religion, namely the Qur'an and the Sunna (what the Muslim prophet was reported to have said or done). He had no regard for *ijmā'* or consensus (i.e., that which trustworthy imams have agreed on) which the majority of theologians accept as a third source of Sharia. He believed that *ijmā'* was responsible for the disunification of the *Umma* (Islamic community). He is often associated with the Wahhābiyya fundamentalist movement that began in what is now Saudi Arabia in the second half of the 18th century, inspired by Muḥammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb who died in 1792.

8 "Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī, a 14th-century Muslim jurist who lived in Granada, has had a tremendous influence on modernist as well as revivalist Muslim legal thinkers of the last two centuries. Most Muslim thinkers regard his doctrine relating to the objectives of law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'a*) as a philosophy of Islamic law and his analysis of religious innovation (*bid'a*) as a theory of Islamic normativity relevant to modern Islamic thought" (Masud 2013, 353–374).

humans are to compassionately interact with mother nature, the “Mother of humankind, not its mistress ... Humans came out of its womb just as much as they came out from the womb of their own mothers, and mothers can never be mistresses” (Taha 2006, 45).

Similarly, spiritual and ethical values cannot be subjected to rational criticism for they are bound by some form of transcendentalism that is common to most cultures. Consequently, Taha levels his harsh criticism at the various separations introduced by Western modernity, the foremost of which is the separation between politics and religion owing to the purported connotation of religion with legendary and irrational myths. Here, he insists that the Islamic tradition and Sharia accord with the requirements of rationality. Moreover, spirituality, the need to connect with internal/indigenous as well as external/foreign spatial and temporal worlds, is a natural need of all humans; the significant discoveries of modern science still do not explain the ever-present recognised mysteries of human diversity and the universe. Furthermore, modernity was built on the critique of traditional religions, in particular the political body of the Church and its thousand-year rejection of reason and science, and this history is particular to the West and cannot be generalised or extended to the early Islamic tradition.

The insidious repercussions of modernity have demanded a philosophical examination of the issue of ethics, as it would seem that the Arab-Islamic *nahḍa*, as promoted by scholars such as Rifāʿa Rāfiʿ al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801–1873), Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838–1897) and Muḥammad ʿAbduh (1849–1905), did not address ethics sufficiently, at least theoretically, owing to the excessive preoccupation of these scholars with reviving the value of reason in the intellectual tradition of their times. Also, the works of most Orientalists, such as the well-known scholar Ernest Renan (1823–1892), on Islamic philosophy, had been concerned with this philosophy as mediated by and transmitted from the Greek legacy; they had not tried to locate its genesis in the vast corpus of the Islamic tradition that includes theology, jurisprudence theories (*fiqh and uṣūl al-fiqh*), and Sufism. Mohammed Hashas and Mutaz al-Khatib (2020, Introduction) have enumerated the host of scholars who have approached the problem of ethics in the context of Islamic tradition throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In response to the growing challenges of modernity, the upsurge of interest in ethics has been marked by disputes among both the intellectual as well as political camps with regard to the branch of ethics to be prioritised in public spaces, “should they be religious, secular, secular-religious, fully rational, or semi-rational?” (Hashas and al-Khatib 2020, 11).

The “trusteeship paradigm” (*iʿtimāniyya*)—first translated as such by Hashas (2015) or as Fadi Zatari (2022) translated it, “entrustment ethics”—developed

by Taha since the late 1970s and 1980s has taken the question of ethics as its major concern. Taha derived his version of ethics from the fusion of morality and revelation and the disruption of the Western dichotomisation of religion and reason or religion and politics. In his view, reason should serve the ethical values of humankind and is always in need of guidance from a transcendent power that can be reached through the mystical knowledge Sufism provides, which elevates the self to the sublime. Man can reach his humanity only when he submits to his ethical identity, rather than only to his rational identity, which is accountable for much of human civilisational decadence. The rational faculty can be seen only as a means to achieve the ethical identity that is in turn the yardstick against which to measure one's degree of humanity. In *Su'āl al-akhlāq* (*The Question of Ethics*), Taha asserts that "there is no humanity without ethics" (Abderrahmane 2000, 147). That is, the human essence is determined by ethicality and not rationality. In line with his Sufi prioritising of praxis over theory, he envisages ethics to be the realm of practice; that is, what one does is more important than what one thinks or says.

Given the centrality of ethics in his philosophical perception, Taha Abderrahmane (2000) distinguishes between three types of ethics, in correspondence with his suggested realms of reason. While "abstract ethics" (*akhlāq mujarrada*) remains utilitarian in its goals, and "guided ethics" (*akhlāq musaddada*) concerns the application of religious laws, which are not necessarily interested in the spiritual dimensions, "supported ethics" (*akhlāq mu'ayyada*) is considered the goal of Taha's ethical plan. It combines spiritual content with worldly practices to advance Islamic universal ethics for the whole of humanity. In *Bu's al-dahrāniyya* (*The Misery of Secularism*), Taha criticises the movements of materialism and secularism, which separate ethics from religion in their search to strike a division between religion and politics (Abderrahmane 2014). He insists that it is only in the revealed tradition of religion that one can reach a definition of ethicality that is not marred by the subjective instincts and whimsical thoughts of humans. He considers ethics the cornerstone of any initiative for political or social change. Ethics remains null and void if it is not subjected to the tests of practical adoption.

The trusteeship paradigm is closely connected to the ethical project Taha has constructed in his various publications. For instance, in the first volume of his trilogy *Dīn al-ḥayā'* (*The Religion of Testimony and Sight*), he elaborates on God's covenants, that is, the pacts that connect humans to the metaphysical world: the covenant of testimony (*shahāda*) or pledging allegiance to God as the Lord of all worlds; the covenant of trust (*amāna*) which refers to the voluntary human acceptance of the divine message and the responsibility of being vicegerent on earth; the covenant of self-purification (*tazkiya*): abstain-

ing from libidinous drives and material desires. All these concepts amount to strengthening man's connection with the higher source of ethics and values. Taha argues that man has betrayed his original trust pact and become subject to the baser instinct of ownership and the excess of possessions that have marked modern consumerist society (Abderrahmane 2017).

The Enlightenment concept of reason is devoid of any ethical praxis that generates useful knowledge for Muslims. Taha claims that the sacralisation of Western modernity and its association with historical inevitability in the Arab-Islamic sphere deters any serious critique of it. He, however, calls for an "Islamic modernity" that is not couched in harmful materialism, arguing that modernity should be considered in its multiplicity in line with geographical, historical, cultural, and economic variations. Thus, "Just as there is a non-Muslim modernity, there should also be a Muslim modernity" (Abderrahmane 2006, 17) founded primarily on morality and ethical values, which is its *raison d'être* in the first place. Taha's project intends to subvert the universalism European modernity upholds through violence and conquest in exchange for Islamic modernity through the spirit of dialogue and communication. He is for what he calls "contextual universality", rather than "absolutist universality" whereby societies can reinvent and re-create one another's values to come up with new modes that suit their particular circumstances.

According to Taha, there is no one certain definition of modernity; nonetheless, modernity is undoubtedly a common characteristic of humanity, and its genesis is not necessarily European, as ancient civilisations and cultures have always borrowed from, interacted with, and mutually influenced one another. Take the example of European colonies and their contribution to changing the cultural landscapes of Western cultures. The same thing can be said about the influence of Islamic civilisation on European civilisation in various domains ranging from medicine, mathematics, and philosophy. Modernity, therefore, is not fundamentally Western in spirit or form.

Modernity is inseparable from colonialism and globalisation—which are part and parcel of its development, and it is through colonialism that Europe expanded its universalising values and achieved hegemonic superiority over the rest of the world. For Taha, modern globalisation lacks ethical content; he suggests infusing it with moral content, fair dialogue, and justice, which Islamic modernity can contribute to help form a just global society.

Taha's ethical project cannot be understood in isolation from politics, as it rejects the division of the constituents of society into discrete and separate elements. For him, all these constituents should be governed by the concept of ethical priorities. To reiterate, he refutes the identification of humans as rational beings, for "a denuded reason" (Hallaq 2019) or abstract reason is

overly focused on the ends, which may in the process culminate in unethical consequences—colonialism and the world wars being clear examples.

In the Islamic context, Taha is critical of secularism (*laïcité*) and political Islam as promoted by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Arab world and by the Shiite mullahs in Iran. He prioritises spiritual purification over the worldly drives of politics, believing that it is only through *tazkiya* that man can achieve his human purposes.

In discussing the relationship between religion and politics, Taha also raises the issue of democracy and its suitability for non-European societies. He vehemently opposes the basic aspects of democracy that are rooted only in mundane concerns. He explains that moral values are derived from religion rather than being a mere human invention as the discourse of democracy deems them; they are not, as suggested by this discourse, only responsive to human needs and volition. This discourse falls in the sphere of politics, which uses it as a means of government; that is to say, politics employs this discourse of democracy to serve the three foundations of democracy, namely, freedom of speech, voting, and protesting. In pursuit of these foundations, the discourse of democracy in its Western liberal form nurtures certain ignoble human impulses and sensual desires such as excessive consumerism, unbounded sexuality, environmental damage, and genetic manipulation that seeks eternal life for human beings.⁹

Ethics is not Taha's sole concern. Indeed, he is also known for his creative use of language that coheres with his ethical agenda to renew and revive Arabic, which has depended too much on the Western cultural and philosophical traditions, as a language that is adequate for philosophising. This endeavour requires using terms and words that are derived—or even coined—in accordance with the worldview of the Arab-Islamic tradition and justifies his penchant for phrasing and structuring his thought in language that is innovative with regard to the contemporary Arabic-speaking readership. Undoubtedly, an audacious endeavour to renew the Arab-Islamic tradition and loosen the yoke of Western frames of reference necessitates innovative tailoring of the Arabic language and careful drawing on the specific means and methods of its embedding tradition.

The concept of the discursive field is quite relevant to Taha's linguistic innovation, as it highlights the importance of recognising the specificity of the linguistic and cultural constituents of the tradition. Moreover, both discursive field and linguistic innovation find tangible illustration in his theory

⁹ Taha Abderrahmane (2017, 216) refers to these aberrations as immoral behaviours (*istifhāsh*).

of translation, which is a viable instrument for his reformist project and its dialogic dimensions. There have been some recent efforts to decentralise this Western ethnocentric standpoint by opening up the burgeoning discipline of Translation Studies to other traditions such as the Arabic or Chinese traditions. These academic efforts have resulted in projects such as the *Anthology of Arabic Discourse on Translation* (2022) and *Anthology of Chinese Discourse on Translation* (2006). Taha's philosophical project views language and translation as a means to connect Arab-Islamic readers to their original tradition while simultaneously remaining open to other cultural heritages. It is assumed that this will ultimately pave the way for their active contribution to world civilisation, rather than perpetuating their role as imitating spectators.

Taha's participation in the debate about the Arabic contribution to the field of translation is judiciously related to his intellectual project of localising philosophy within the Arab-Islamic tradition. The current philosophy that is prevalent in Arab academic circles is principally cut off from the Arab-Islamic cultural heritage. It is no more than an attempt to translate Western thought through Western terms. The titles of Taha's books *al-Ḥaqq al-'arabī fī al-ikhtilāf al-falsafī* (*The Arab Right to Philosophical Difference*, 2002) and *al-Ḥaqq al-islāmī fī al-ikhtilāf al-fikrī* (*The Islamic Right to Intellectual Difference*, 2005) explicitly reveal his search for a novel and free way of philosophising through Arabic terms by capitalising on the spirit and ethical right of difference that pervades postmodern philosophical trends. Hashas (2015, 75) argues that Taha's main contribution concerns his determination to "re-ground Arab Islamic philosophy in its original sources (*al-manhaj al-uṣūlī*) for the practice of thought from within as if going back to the early stage of Arab-Islamic philosophy."

One of the significant reasons for the perceived distance between Arab thought and the Arab public is linked to the failure of Arab philosophical thinking to draw on its own worldviews and concepts in responding to the challenges of modern life. The slavish translation of modern Western knowledge and its perspectives into the Arabic language turns the latter into a vehicle that is capable of neither penetrating the Arabs' social imaginary nor reflecting their lived experience. To counter this absence of originality in Arab philosophy, Taha urges his audience to translate foreign thought, using Arabic terms and reconnecting with the authentic tradition and natural flow of the Arabic language and its related reality. This innovative way of translating is at the heart of his aim to develop an Arab identity capable of philosophising and maintaining its difference, which is an essential requirement for cultural dialogue and Arab participation in human civilisation and history. As such, Taha's viewpoint can

be contextualised within the postcolonial rhetoric which sees in the hybrid paradigm an Arab resistance to the hegemonic manipulation of knowledge and power.¹⁰

Intellectual independence, as explained earlier, is realised through engaging with the discursive field of the original tradition. This strategic discursivity should play an important role in the process of translating foreign thought; it is admirably achieved through what Taha Abderrahmane (2011, 2013) labels “foundational translation” (*al-tarjama al-taʿšiliyya*), which entails ingenious adaptation and alteration to suit the discursive field (the linguistic, socio-cultural, and value systems) of the receiving texts. This seems to accord with the postcolonial rhetoric of translation that disrupts and evades the hegemonic supremacy of the Western structure of thought and frames of reference.

In his book, *al-Ḥiwār ufuqan li-l-fikr* (*Dialogue as a Horizon for Thought*), Taha advances his views about translation. He comments on the Arabic common and literal translation of the Western ontological axiom (Abderrahmane 2013). He assumes that Descartes’s “cogito, ergo sum” (I think, therefore I am) is barren and unable to inspire innovative thinking in the Arab-Islamic tradition. For him, this cogito should be translated as “See(k) to find”, to use Hashas’ rendering in English, which is more coherent within the Arab-Islamic intellectual tradition and thus has a discursive correspondence with the Arabic language. This innovative translation encapsulates the specificity of the Arab ways of expressing ideas and fundamental truths; in the pre-Islamic poetic tradition, the speaker of a poem would address an imagined interlocutor rather than speaking to himself. Taha claims that this translated cogito is rooted in the Islamic worldview. Taha’s inspiration for the translation came from a poem attributed to the Andalusian Sufi Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mursī, which Taha came across by chance:¹¹

10 In this connection, Basalamah (2019, 189) believes that Taha seeks to achieve “a revisited and ethically self-exigent understanding of translation (which) should allow for the re-founding of a modernity that is not its Western example, but rather a full-fledged and independent Arab version.”

11 In *al-Ḥiwār ufuqan li-l-fikr* (*Dialogue as a Horizon for Thought*, 2013), Taha explains how he based his translation of the *cogito* on the specificity of the discursive field of Arab thought: “This might be an old Sufi verse; nevertheless, I was stunned by it, due to the fact that, in my opinion, it provides strong evidence that I have been right in how I translated the *cogito* for two reasons. First, I have chosen a terminology that is grounded in the discursive field [of Arab thought]. This is backed up by the fact that someone else has used the same wording, which happened neither on purpose nor by virtue of prior agreement. Second, this statement (i.e., *unzur tajid*) opens up new possibilities for ingenuity that supersede the original version in Latin or French. The originator of the *cogito* (i.e., Descartes) basically wanted to use it as a proof for the existence of the self. In the next step, he took this

O you, who wander in the wilderness seeking His secret,
See(k) and you will find in yourself existence in its entirety.

(*yā tā'ihan fī mahmahin 'an sirrihi*
unzur tajid fika al-wujūd bi-asrihi.)¹²

Generally, Taha contends that the task of translating a philosophical text is as complex as those receiving the translation, involving multiple stages and procedures. Using only one straightforward method of translating would discourage Arab receivers from engaging with the translated philosophical discourse. The translator should consider the different stages of the receivers' acquisition of philosophical competence. Initially confronting these diverse receivers with a word-for-word translation of the philosophical text would discourage them from appreciating and comprehending the ideas expressed, as the translated language would sound clumsy and awkward.

Therefore, translators must primarily train their Arab audience to acquire the ability to philosophise, by way of rendering philosophy accessible to them. This can be accomplished by using Taha's aforementioned innovative method of foundational translation to domesticate the source text and remove its strangeness. As readers become familiar with the foreign philosophical thought in Arabic terms, the translator can move to the "communicative translation" (*al-tarjama al-tawṣīliyya*), which refers to the connective translation of every single unit of meaning, including those that seem unusual. Gradually, Arab readers will be prepared to receive the original content in its entirety. Only then will the translator achieve the translation of each word of the foreign text into the target language, and this is called "the ultimate/final translation" (*al-tarjama al-tahṣīliyya*).¹³ Taha urges Moroccan educational curriculum design-

proof as the basis from which he went on to infer the existence of God and the world. Conversely, the counterpart that I suggested, which is *unzur tajid*, paves the way to prove the existences of all three at once. This is because we say, 'Look!, then you will find yourself' and 'Look!, then you will find Allah', and 'Look!, then you will find the world'. Thus, from this expression, we can deduce all three known proofs of Descartes in an equal manner. In addition, the philosopher has the choice of how to arrange the order of these proofs due to further considerations. For the philosopher might choose to put the proof for the existence of Allah first, as it is the basis on which the other two (proofs) stem from and so on and so forth" (translated by Suleiman 2021, 63).

12 Abū al-Abbās al-Mursī was a 13th-century Andalusian scholar and poet from Murcia and a prominent shaykh of the Shādhiliyya Sufi order.

13 In general, the domesticated content the readers receive initially serves as an intermediary scaffold that helps assimilate the connective content acquired through the communicat-

ers to adopt this pedagogical strategy to train students' minds to philosophise and adapt philosophy according to the goals and needs of their lived reality. Relying merely on the memorisation of philosophical theses is tantamount to crippling the creativity with which philosophy principally endows the mind.

As a member of a Sufi order, Taha believes that his involvement with Sufism has enabled him to see the nature of meaning, which resides beyond logical or philosophical abstract reason. Spiritual experience can also be a path to further knowledge, the attainment of which is not limited to using only Aristotelian absolute and concrete reasoning or modern logic. More importantly, spiritual thinking sustains the fullest exploration of language with which to capture the ecstatic sentiment and profound imagination of the Sufis. Taha's conception of foundational translation draws inspiration from this Sufi version of maximising the ample potential of the translating language in order to reduce the strangeness and unfamiliarity of the other's thinking patterns. Nonetheless, this Sufi rendering of language is a metonymic reference to the imperative of subjecting the translating language to the power of the local tradition and authentic cultural heritage. Taha does not imagine—in the sense of refusing—an Arab-Islamic reawakening without a return to the original sources of the tradition and a turning away from the superficial adoption of modern abstract rationalism.

One would be tempted to interpret Taha's insistence on returning to the original tradition as an invitation for embracing a fundamentalist imaginary and identity that are imprisoned within the glorious past. However, Taha Abderrahmane (2013) affirms that the present as an independent moment does not exist. Employing postmodern-like diaspora literary tropes, he envisages a present that is part of the past, and together they inform the future; for innovation to be productive, it is always in need of the future.¹⁴ Since identity is unstable

ive translation. And both translations act as an intermediary for grasping the full literal rendition of the foreign text.

- 14 In his theorisation of diaspora, James Clifford (1994, 318) argues: "In diaspora experience, the co-presence of 'here' and 'there' is articulated with an antiteleological (sometimes messianic) temporality. Linear history is broken, the present constantly shadowed by a past that is also a desired, but obstructed, future: a renewed, painful yearning." The point to stress here is the necessity to perpetuate the interaction between different temporal modes of past, present, and future. The past should serve as the springboard against which future projections are enabled. A renewed sense of being and impetus for innovation can be activated by this back and forth between temporal modalities. Roger Bromley (2000, 51–52) pertinently remarks: "Both forward looking and backward looking, the (diasporic) narratives use memories as a resource for the new and the future, a setting in motion again of what has become static or inert: crossing borders and opening up frontiers."

and always changing and expanding into the future, innovation is unthinkable without tradition, which functions as the starting point from which to move forward. The European Renaissance was built on a return to the Greek tradition, whereas the Arabs are wont to base their version of renaissance on the critique of tradition. Taha considers tradition the umbilical cord that links innovation and the Arab renaissance. This explains his unwavering demands to draw on the rhetorical character and discursive field of the tradition to produce Arabic translations and create Arabic terminology that are true to the specificity and difference of the Arabic language. This task becomes even more urgent when translating from another tradition, as the temptation to mimic can obliterate the translator's cultural identity.

Taha's undertaking to renew and revive the Arab tradition as manifested both in his linguistic innovations and philosophical perceptions of translation, is facilitated by his acquaintance and dialogue with the Western philosophical tradition. For example, his insistence on subjecting the Arabic language to the idiosyncrasies and personality of the original Arab tradition emanates from a cultural deterministic view similar to the famous Whorf-Sapir theory of cultural relativity (Benjamin Lee Whorf, 1956). Accordingly, the way the Arabs see the world is determined by their language, which in turn should reflect their particular tradition. Equally, his advocating adopting a living translation is at the heart of the functionalist communicative scholarship on translation (Christian Nord 1997). It simply suggests that the target culture regulates the way the source text should be translated.

Indeed, Taha Abderrahmane (2011) himself blesses such intellectual borrowing and cultural mingling and argues that open minds, which see from different viewpoints, are more capable of carrying out constructive and beneficial dialogues than closed myopic minds. By contrast, he disproves the Eurocentrically-oriented theories and sciences that rely exclusively on Western logos and neglect other possible traditions. It is here that Taha manifests as a relevant voice that is both outside the Western sphere and in critical conversation with it. This subtly double position, however, does exacerbate the complexity of approaching Taha's intellectual project or positioning his philosophical identity in straightforward and easy terms. For instance, it is quite hard to define Taha as either a traditionalist or modernist because his thought oscillates between tradition and modernity and is always in search of a modernity that does not disrupt the discursive field of this modernity's milieu. It is difficult for purely liberal, left, and secular scholars to accept the spiritual *élan* that runs through his project. Although it would seem that he is critical of the uncritical adoption of Greek and modern philosophy by classical as well as contemporary Arab-Islamic thinkers, one cannot affirm his complete rejection of their thought.

Hashas (2020) maintains that Taha's intellectual project moves from the local to the universal, and this movement toward the universal cannot be achieved without engaging to a certain degree with the scholars he critiques. Hashas explains:

Systematic thought starts somewhere, and (Taha's) starts locally before it moves to theorize for the future of humanity universally. This engagement with modernity and theorization for a future "civilization of ethos", as he calls it, is what colours his project with universality. He goes beyond the local to the universal, unlike a lot of his contemporaries who do the opposite. They start universally then go local, and in doing so they lose contact with the local they wish to reform (Hashas 2020, 55).

Despite his philosophical depth, innovation, and complexity, Taha's intellectual project has not been given the consideration it deserves, and it has not received sufficiently critical attention from international and Arab scholars specialising in Arab-Islamic scholarship. The very few references to his thought appeared only in the mid-2000s.¹⁵ Likewise, his fellow Moroccan scholars have not responded seriously to his thought except for some sporadic comments. Al-Jabri did not react to Taha's staunch criticism of his work, whereas Abdellah Laroui (2005) did occasionally refer in his memoirs to Taha's "introverted" thought to consolidate his thesis regarding the necessity of an epistemological rupture with tradition to achieve renewal and modernity for the Arab world. Following Laroui, Kamal Abdellatif (2018) disapproved of Taha's ideas and denied them any consideration in the history of the changing Arab nations. Similarly, Abdelilah Belkeziz (2014), who is influenced by al-Jabrian philosophy, excluded Taha from the weighty tome he devoted to Arab thought, owing to his disagreement with Taha's views.

The same tone of disapproval was expressed by some Lebanese scholars such as Ali Harb (1996–1999) who blamed Taha for allegedly rejecting all kinds of thought that are not rooted in the Arab-Islamic tradition and for endorsing introversion.¹⁶ Ridwan al-Sayyid (2012) shares Harb's accusation of Taha's isol-

15 Hashas (2020, 50) cited the following examples: Lahoud 2005; Hallaq 2013, 2019; Hashas 2013, 2014, 2015, 2019a, 2019b; Moosa 2014; Kigar 2015; Bevers 2016, 2018; Borik 2016; Mimouni 2016; Belhaj 2018; Tais 2018.

16 The unfavourable reception of Taha's philosophical thought was also expressed in some doctoral dissertations. For example, in his critical study of Taha's philosophy, Suleiman (2021, 69) concluded that parts of Taha's intellectual project seem "superficial and simplistic" despite their philosophical complexity. He attributes this simplicity to Taha's short-

ationist views and rejection of secular nation states and believes that Taha's stance could contribute to inciting extremist fanaticism in Arab societies. Furthermore, al-Sayyid (2018) launched another attack on what he considered Taha's introverted and protectionist condemnation of the American-Israeli alliance, which would not help the deteriorating conditions of most Arab states. The Jordanian critic Fahmi Jadaan (2014) was likewise critical of Taha's work, claiming that the notion of ethics advanced by Taha does not serve the multiplicity and plurality of moral values that the complex nature of modern societies dictate.

Hashas' critical engagement with Taha's philosophical standpoint has, to some extent, lessened the impact of these undue critiques. Hashas has posited that Taha's latest book *Thughūr al-murābaṭa: Muqāraba ʾitimāniyya li-ṣirāʾāt al-umma al-ḥāliyya (Posts of Resistance: A Trusteeship Approach to the Current Struggles of the Umma, 2018)* can be seen as ample evidence for Taha's non-acquiescence to the political discourses of power, saying that it "can be considered to be the most direct and critical of state regimes among his overall writings. With this work he challenges the stereotype that Sufis or Sufi scholars are "silent" in the face of state institutions and regimes" (Hashas 2020, 50).

Hashas' reviews of Taha's project can serve as a response to Suleiman's hasty critique of Taha's spiritual identity. In Hashas' interpretation of Taha's spiritual orientation he suggests that Taha's involvement with Sufism should be understood as a private matter, which does not necessarily interfere with his intellectual and ethical project. Moreover, Taha's Sufi orientation is not based on popular and folkloric rituals as is the case with some forms of "modern individualist spirituality that is self-centred, and praxis-less". Hashas continues: "The trusteeship's use of "spiritual self-criticism" is learned, philosophical, as well as pietist. It navigates between the secular and religious, the public and the private, to create a third worldview that is neither secular nor religious as

sightedness in approaching leading philosophers such as Nietzsche and his staunch indictment of the malaise of modernity, which could support his opposing argument to European modernity. Suleiman has also criticised the opacity and the intricate nature of his language, the ahistoricity of his discourse, and disengagement with the physical realm, which stand in the way of his reaching a wider readership. Added to this is his reticence to debate the problem of monarchism along with his critical discussion of secularism, Islamism, and liberalism. Taha's only positive contribution, according to Suleiman, is his attempt to base Islamic philosophical thought on the indigenous tradition and to circumvent the intrusion of Western paradigms. Another worthy contribution of Taha's project is his insistence on going beyond the precincts of what Suleiman calls "the outward formalities of religious commandments" to develop a new concept of Islamic ethics that is consistent with the environment of modernity.

commonly understood" (Hashas 2020, 53). This sort of Sufism aims at keeping faith and practice inseparable. Hashas' positive reception is shared by Abdellah Seyyid Ould Bah, a Mauritanian scholar, who acknowledged Taha's philosophical achievement in his book dealing with the most influential Arab thinkers of the second half of the twentieth century (see Hashas 2020, 52).

In conclusion, Taha's philosophical call for the return to the Arab-Islamic tradition as a prerequisite for the reformation of the Arabic language and maintenance of its individuality and difference may seem on the surface to promote an isolationist agenda. Nonetheless, in the contemporary disputes regarding late modernity and hybridised identities, such identity difference is described as a requirement for intercultural dialogue and dialogic cosmopolitanism. Anthony Appiah (1998, 202) defines cosmopolitanism as reaching a formula of a "universalism plus difference". According to Taha's reasoning, Arabs and Muslims can participate in the global civilisation when they are ready to critically engage with modernity and showcase their creative difference, which draws from all the resources of universality and "cosmopolitanism" that Arabs and Muslims can contribute to world civilisation by capitalising on the inherent tenets and principles of their tradition. More importantly, their civilisational impact could be more substantial if they should focus on the gaps and limitations in modern Western culture. In other words, they could concentrate on the intersecting aesthetic, spiritual, humanitarian, moral, and ethical values of which modern excessive materialism and capitalist rationalism are in sore need.

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*Dialogue and Only Dialogue,
and Nothing Else but Dialogue*



Dialogue and Only Dialogue, and Nothing Else but Dialogue

It is not strange that dialogue and truth are considered synonymous. From the perspective of the speaker, truth is seen as the origin of dialogue, given the assumption that the content of words is supposed to form the basis of truth. Therefore, just as the witness speaker, in particular, must speak the truth, the adversarial speaker, in general, must pursue dialogue. Likewise, as the former must speak the truth alone, so the latter must pursue dialogue alone. And as the former must speak nothing but the truth, so the latter must engage in nothing but dialogue. The explanation of this dialogic truth appears in the following three forms:

Firstly, there are infinite paths to reach the truth. What is true in itself, in contrast to the common belief, is not stable or unchangeable; rather, it engages in change and renewal. Hence, what is in its origin renewed can be reached in multiple ways. And whenever there is a multiplicity of paths, there is a need for dialogue among those seeking the dialogic truth.

Secondly, the continuity of dialogue between different parties, groups, or individuals, leads, in time, to the reduction of disagreements between them, allowing them to benefit from one another, in that one of these parties may abandon its opinion whenever its evidence proves weak. This party would then gradually adopt the opinion of its opponent, or would by contrast embark on fortifying its evidence when the strength of its opinion is evident, drawing more attention to it on the part of its opponent, who eventually ends up accepting and believing in this evidence. Hence, if the disagreement plays the role of a disconnecting disease, the dialogue assumes the role of a healing cure.

Thirdly, dialogue contributes to the opening of the mind and the expanding of its receptive faculties, and a view that is not grounded in dialogue cannot attain this kind of openness. Indeed, dialogue means to consider matters from two sides, which is not the case when considering matters from only one side. It is a given that the mind changes when the angles of vision are shifted, and the more the mind changes, the more depth and comprehensiveness it will attain. The mind that does not change is without exception not a living one, whereas the mind that is always changing is a living mind *par excellence*. This being the case, when the mind considers matters from two sides, the extent to which it changes is necessarily twofold as opposed to when considering matters from

only one side, and, as a consequence, it becomes deeper and more comprehensive. Nonetheless, the mind can change more than this when the evidence of both parties not only agrees but is also parallel. We know that multiplicity thrives more in pairing than in agreeing only and that the depth and capacity of the mind increase to a greater degree in the case of pairing than in the case of agreeing.

Owing to these factors, which posit dialogue as the core of the mind, I have concerned myself with dialogue for more than two decades and undertook to write a book on the fundamentals of dialogue at a time when many segments of society were not engaging in any form of dialogue.¹ My book dwells on this neglected issue of dialogue. Perhaps, it has become now a more apposite and opportune topic to discuss.

Although the Moroccan political arena has recently witnessed an upsurge of interest in some forms of dialogic practice, the intellectual circles have not yet shown any engagement with this new dialogic space. The members of the Moroccan intellectual circle do not enter into any form of dialogue with one another. They either isolate themselves in their ivory towers, being convinced of the veracity of their opinion in all matters, or deliberately cling to their aberrant and extreme views in accord with the common maxim “disagree to be recognised”. They may also assume an anonymous name and address if they disagree with one another—as if revealing their true identity would belittle their status. Alternatively, if someone disagrees with them they refuse to respond and urge their associates to do the same, as if responding to a discordant view would diminish the value of their knowledge and scholarship.

The truth of the matter is that those who close the door of dialogue or disrespect its ethics kill the spirit of productive reason, which is the result of testing evidence from at least two sides. Those who kill this spirit sever the veins that convey this tested knowledge to them and thus deprive themselves of the chance to correct their opinions and expand their discernment capacities. The boundaries of their mind will contract and those of their passions will expand. Therefore, they will neither benefit from their knowledge no matter how assiduous they are nor will they benefit others. Instead, they will harm themselves and others; moreover, they will kill the spirit of the upright community that derives guidance from seeking counsel among its members, even if they are no more than two people. Those who kill this spirit impede the paths that convey the common good and positive action and deprive themselves of

1 See Taha Abderrahmane, *On the Fundamental of Dialogue and the Renewing of Theology* (Casablanca: The Modern institute for Publication and Distribution, Cultural Center). Second edition (Beirut: Arab Cultural Center, 2000).

reforming their deeds and refining their morals. Their egotistical impulses will be intensified and their urge to cooperate will be weakened. As a result, their actions will not improve them, even if they imagine their actions are making them good, let alone allow them to reform others. On the contrary, their actions will corrupt both themselves and others.

Perhaps, owing to the transformation that our society witnessed during the turn of the new millennium, we are in dire need of these complementary spirits: “The spirit of beneficial reason” and “the spirit of upright community” that result from the dialogic practice whose particular conditions are satisfied. That being said, it is high time we made general and specific educational plans to provide our developing societies with solid training in the methodologies of dialogue and its ethics, especially now that we have a good example of this dialogue in developed societies. We also have much to learn from the vast heritage of our tradition and history to guide us in initiating this education and facilitating its spread among all groups and individuals. Our ancestors have left for us a rich tradition of debate and discussion that can be found only among nations that have attained a higher degree of civilisation—to say nothing of their abundant intellectual output in the field of dialogue, whether historical, descriptive, prescriptive, systemic, or organisational theorisation.

As I had a strong belief in the significance of dialogue early on, I welcomed all the invitations I received from various media organisations to discuss the topic of dialogue. What I offer readers here is a concise summary of my interviews with these organisations during various times and different cultural occasions. These include the Moroccan newspapers *al-‘Alam* (the Standard), *al-Itihād al-ishtirākī* (the Socialist Union), *al-Aḥdāth al-maghribiyya* (Moroccan Events), as well as other Arabic Newspapers such as *al-Quds* (Jerusalem), *al-Mustaqilla* (The Independent), and *al-Sha‘b* (the People), and the national tv and Moroccan Channel 2 (2M tv). These interviews were not of the idle-talk variety used to fill in the blank spaces in newspapers or to pass the time at the beginning of broadcasting. Rather, they consisted of informative explanations and purposeful reflections that required the same level of effort and innovation as goes into any complete authorial work.

I have rearranged the interview questions according to the topics they deal with in order to give readers a comprehensive view of each issue I was pre-occupied with regarding “tradition,” “philosophy,” “logic,” “translation,” “Islam,” “Sufism,” “Averroism,” and “globalisation” in the hope of helping them understand and delve deeper into the details of the complicated theories included in my published work.

I pray that God will bless this work so that readers may benefit from it now and in the future. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds.

Traditions

We exist in tradition the way we exist in the world
We have no choice in this matter nor can we detach ourselves from it



Arab thought has been preoccupied with issues related to tradition for many decades. Does this mean that the problem of tradition is settled?

Indeed, there has been a strong concern with Arab-Islamic tradition (*turāth*) for some time.¹ However, the apparent decline of interest in this field does not mean that the question of tradition is definitely solved or that its importance has become irrelevant. As the Arab Muslim continues to be preoccupied with the issues of identity and self, the return to tradition is inevitable. He seeks to strengthen the structure of his identity on the basis of tradition and heritage. The negative judgements that dubious researchers have pronounced concerning tradition will not stop the Arab Muslim's ongoing reliance on its elements, to a greater or lesser extent, to protect his identity. His relationship with tradition is not based on an assiduous theory that draws on reason (*burhān*). It is instead an emotional and practical relationship in which he is wholly involved. It is not an optional relationship that he can enter or leave whenever he wishes.

1 References to the word “tradition” are common in most modern societies. Tradition denotes traditional ways of thinking and their various discursive manifestations such as those of the Indian and Chinese traditions, as well as those that emerged during the European Enlightenment. However, “tradition” in the modern Muslim world has another particular meaning. Wael Hallaq notes that *turāth* is “a neologism that is by definition unknown to Islamic languages prior to the nineteenth century” (2019, 9). He explains in an endnote, “I say “by definition” because *turāth* is incomprehensible without the notion of legacy (*irth*, *mīrāth*) from a past that is at least mostly dead. Technically, to be a beneficiary of an *irth*/*mīrāth* is to assume a legator, a *muwarrith*, one who must be dead in order to be such a legator. *Turāth*, therefore, is not, and cannot be, a living tradition, but only an inheritance from what was once a living tradition” (2019, 281). However, according to the metaphysical language of ‘Abd al-Ilāh Bilqazīz, the Arabs maintained a lasting relationship with their past to the extent that they live their past in their present as if their bond with the past is never severed (cited Hallaq 2019, 9).

It is rather a preordained relationship that he may neither enter nor leave. It is quite obvious that whenever his identity is jeopardised or its capacities afflicted, the Arab Muslim immediately turns trustingly to his vast heritage in search of elements that will help stabilise and revitalise his identity.

It would seem that our need for tradition is as imperative as our need for not becoming overly absorbed in it. And yet such a balance is, in practice, difficult to maintain, why is that?

I do not think that my interest in tradition is an interest in a useless past in which we fear becoming absorbed to the extent that we are prevented from having an interest in the present. When we assume that someone abandons his original tradition, we do not necessarily suppose that he is wholly distancing himself from it. On the contrary, it means that he turns to an alien tradition in response to his lack of trust in his own identity. For example, those who call for abandoning tradition in the name of modernity and acquiring modern knowledge as defined in the West, are in fact calling for replacing the original tradition with a foreign one. That is, modern knowledge is generally known to be supported by Western tradition. Modern knowledge reflects the characteristics and vestiges of Western tradition despite its claims of “objectivity” and “scientificity”. These criteria are themselves values produced by a foreign tradition, and their alleged inclusiveness and universalism are in fact attributes of this tradition rather than being inclusive products of modern knowledge. Strangely, the Arabs and Muslims who are calling for these values are still unable to identify the aspects of “relativism” and “localism” in them, let alone criticise or reform them. They cannot even imagine the existence of possible alternatives to these values despite knowing that their original creators have begun to cast doubt on them and demonstrate their limits.

The fact of the matter is that original tradition was and will remain an essential requirement for us whenever we want to restore confidence in our abilities and authenticate our source of inspiration. Moreover, this ongoing engagement with tradition does not amount to preserving it literally without any consideration of its past and present requirements. This is because preservation, no matter how hard we try, is never possible. No one can break all his relationships with the present and return to the past and live according to its values the way his ancestors did. Those who pretend to do so are either unaware or lying because no one can circumvent the myriad influences of the present—even were he to enter a bottle and seal it; for would he not make this bottle using the tools available in his era, using the techniques and expertise of his time?

In your opinion, what are the methodologies from the field of intellectual scholarship that can be used to deal with tradition?

Most of the assumptions underlying the theories and methodologies used in the critique of tradition are difficult to accept. Even if we theoretically accept some of them, it is difficult to believe in most of their findings. Similarly, even if we theoretically accept these findings, it is difficult to accept most of their applications. These perceived difficulties are ascribed to the obvious errors these methodologies and theories fell into when dealing with the contents of tradition. Those who came up with these methodologies should have sought genuine knowledge about the contents of tradition instead of issuing hasty judgments about it.

Another source for this difficulty is related to the inability of those scholars to develop effective methodological, rational, and intellectual means to critique tradition.² The most useful and accurate theories regarding tradition are in fact developed by scholars who have obtained proficiency in using these inherited tools, thus providing their readers with the means that enable them to innovate and employ novel ways of reasoning when they approach the texts of the tradition or consider their contents to verify what has been said about them. This is not possible when scholars show less trust in these texts and their producers as is the case with most current theories and methodologies in intellectual circles. Tradition is thus diminished to the extent that it becomes foreign and its once-celebrated contributors are subsequently slandered. Having faith in tradition and its makers, even if we assume that their work is not really suitable for our time, can strengthen our self-confidence and capabilities in renewing cultural production and continuing the process of building.

Studies regarding tradition have multiplied and differ considerably owing to the diversity of assumptions and theories in the methodological research on tradition, with the result that we are faced with various traditions (materialist, rationalist, spiritual ...). What is your overall understanding vis-à-vis the concept of tradition?

The existing multiplicity of conceptions does not amount to diverse realities of tradition. Indeed, what is multiple and will certainly keep multiplying are the ways tradition is viewed or read. With the increase in new theories and

² I use the term *fikrānī* (intellectual) instead of the term ideological. See the justifications for this use in my book: Abderrahmane 1994, 24–25.

advanced methodologies, these views and readings will continue expanding. Besides, every era is distinguished by a particular way of looking at and reading things. Tradition will not be affected by the abundance of these readings if the audience is not forced to believe in the exclusive truth of certain views and opinions. The latter are prone to differ in their selection of some distinctive elements when approaching the topics of tradition. As such, tradition as a group of definite occurrences remains one although its ways and approaches are as diverse as the number of scholars who are both critically and descriptively interested in it.

For a broad definition of tradition, should it be necessary, I see no better way than comparing it with its related concepts of “culture” and “civilisation”. Tradition is more general than these. While culture is seen as a discursive and behavioural outcome that draws on living national values that are desirable and esteemed tradition—in addition to including these living values—it may contain national values that local communities no longer esteem or deem relevant, in other words, dead national values. Similarly, while civilisation is seen as a discursive and behavioural outcome that draws on living human values, tradition—besides incorporating these living human values—may include dead human values, which global human society no longer esteems or deems valid. On the basis of this comparison, we can advance the following definition of Arab-Islamic tradition: “It is the totality of contents and discursive behavioural means that determine the productive existence of Arab Muslims in their adoption of a particular set of human and national values, be they living or dead.”

In your work, you have studied the possibilities of advancing new readings of tradition. How do you define the aspects of this reading? How should one read tradition in your opinion? How is your reading different from others?

Certainly, I have sought in more than one book not only to prescribe rules that should be followed when reading tradition but also to practise this reading. These rules are as follows:

Firstly, this reading should pay equal attention to the methods (the organisational structures) through which the tradition’s texts and contents are supposed to operate; this is because the Islamic tradition is replete with these methods, particularly in the domains of linguistics and logic.

Secondly, in the field of methodologies, there is a need to capitalise on updated techniques and procedures, not by burying the aforementioned methods of tradition and obliterating their characteristics, but rather by extracting

them and renewing their course of action. To abstract these methods from tradition without relying on methodological updates would be insufficient. Such an abstraction would be no more than a regurgitation of the past in the manner of the past, and newness will never emerge from such a twofold past.

Thirdly, any method borrowed from a foreign tradition needs to be subjected to sufficient critique and scrutiny, until we discern its descriptive and interpretive appropriateness, before applying it to the Arab-Islamic tradition. As for the method of reason (*burhān*), for instance, we cannot judge the possible existence of reason in our tradition until we are sure that its conceptualisation, which is derived from Western culture, is useful to assess our tradition. I have reached the conclusion that such a concept is not suitable for this kind of assessment because Western rationalism is based principally on theoretical abstraction whereas the rationalism that governs our tradition is based on practice and action (*ʿamal*).

Fourthly, the revision—or cultural cross-pollination—of method should not be in only one direction, as when the Arab-Islamic method is revised or pollinated by means of Western methods but not the other way around. This revision or pollination should be reciprocal so that we revise and pollinate Western methods by means of Arab-Islamic methods, for this twofold revision and pollination is likely to open a path to innovation for the Arab thinker. On the one hand, it will allow him to enrich the original method and breathe life into it. And on the other hand, it will open new possibilities in the modern method that would never have occurred to its creators.

These are the original rules that I have been following both in my reading of tradition and my continuous efforts to renew the Arab-Islamic production of knowledge.

*Your book *Renewing the Method to Assess Tradition* contributes to the formulation of a new Arab-Islamic methodology for tradition. Can you give us a general introduction to this methodology?*

In this book, I have tried not only to create a new direction in the study of tradition but also effect a genuine interruption in it. I will mention three aspects of this interruption:

Firstly, previous research has been mostly concerned with renewing, rationalising, improving, and refining tradition in response to the pressures of cultural emergencies and political circumstances. However, my research targets the knowledge of tradition in terms of its objective determinants and subjective components in accordance with the requirements of a purely scientific examination in as much as it is not permitted to study goals such as “modern-

isation,” “rationalization,” “reformation,” and “refinement” until after attaining a comprehensive understanding of these traditional determinants and assets.

Secondly, the previous studies have mainly considered the most important elements of the contents and implications of tradition. However, my study is concerned fundamentally with the means and methods through which such contents were made, conveyed, and assessed. As a rationale for this, I believe that judging a tradition’s contents can be effective only when preceded by research regarding those means. In my view, any judgment that is not preceded by research is liable to be incomplete and incorrect.

Thirdly, the previous studies have tended to divide tradition into different parts, favouring some over others, and in the end preserving only a small portion in the belief that this responds to the requirements of modernity. Nonetheless, my work does not divide, favour, delete, or make exceptions because wrong assumptions about tradition are no less important than right ones, provided that we work toward deciphering their causes.

Therefore, I have taken great care not to impose on our tradition’s texts the methods that were derived from other traditions, be they ancient or modern. Rather, I have sought these methods within our vast heritage in order to meet the requirement of logic that demands that the method be derived from the subject under study and not from outside of it. I have called these methods “the original methods,” in stark contrast to “borrowed methods”. This does not imply that all borrowed methods are objectionable or unsuitable. Rather, I have stipulated that borrowing or imitation must be preceded by ample critiques to assess their benefits and suitability regarding the subject of tradition. Likewise, it does not imply that I am calling for the stagnation of these original methods even if they prove defective or weak. I am not for discarding their critique in the name of satisfying the innovative methodological prerequisites in the field of scientific research. For example, the “methods of debate” are among the original methods that I have derived from tradition whose way of working I have renewed in accordance with the dictates of modern methodology. The methods of the debate have been practised in diverse domains and trends of tradition by its various doctrinal leaders and its different scientific, intellectual, literary, and dogmatic schools.

You have worked on critiquing and founding the logical and procedural methods necessary for the study of tradition from a distinct, integrative perspective. Your book *Renewing the Method to Assess Tradition* seems to represent an active practice of tradition. Do you not see that the historical action and socio-cultural conditions behind these methods are totally absent in your book?

I would not be mistaken if I should say that since the end of the nineteenth century much ink has been spilled on the historical causes, social circumstances, economic issues, and political reasons connected to a certain phenomenon when the intention is to examine the flow of events. Gradually, whenever we intend to gauge the flow of certain events, we tend to grant these methodologies the legitimacy and sanctity we normally reserve for the path of religion. However, no matter how useful these materialist methodologies prove to be in uncovering important aspects of the phenomena under investigation, they are likely to suffer several of the following flaws:

- a. These methodologies are based on decisions to examine the phenomenon under investigation in terms of the external causes only; its internal structure is often overlooked. As such, those who uphold the materialist methodologies are inclined to subject this phenomenon exclusively to historical, social, economic, and political considerations. They would hold to these external causes, unaware of the internal causes, which would normally entail regarding the phenomenon as an entity that is distinguishable from history, sociology, economics, or politics.
- b. It seems that the forces related to each phenomenon are generally twofold: “factors of internal content” and “factors of external methods”. Apparently, the factors that have preoccupied most scholars of the Arab-Islamic tradition up to now are related to the first group, disregarding entirely the factors of the second group. Working only on the factors of content is unjustifiably rash, knowing that tradition paid great attention to the role of method in the making and channelling of its texts. Moreover, other scholars of tradition have argued that external factors have to be the focus of attention. Thus, they succumb to corrupt judgment, as well as making the mistake of forgetting or negligence, which others have also made. They should have directed their attention to both factors in order to fulfil the requirement of objectivity. No objectivity is possible for those who combine both factors in one since tradition is proven to be built on both of them.

When my aim is to investigate the factors of the internal method of tradition, I focus on the logical and linguistic methods, without neglecting the existing factors of external content. I have never claimed that considering the internal factors overturns the external ones. What I have contended is that studying both contents and external factors should be preceded by considering the methods and internal elements. Additionally, the study of content should be grounded on the existing method to achieve results in which there is no corruption and truths that do not exceed the proper bounds. My study of tradition was innovative in comparison with

previous endeavours. It dwelt mainly on analyzing the internal method of tradition and showing its immense richness and unique precision which we need to exploit in order to uncover the true factors of content.

- c. The act of speaking about the historical action in each phenomenon, whatever it is, is an unjustified reduction. The question about the historical action in the phenomenon under scrutiny is not more important than the question about the logical action in it. If it is justifiable to conduct research on the historical factors of this phenomenon, it is also necessarily appropriate to conduct research on its logical factors. Similarly, if it is justifiable to look into the historical action that has underpinned the logical method, it is necessarily appropriate to look into the logical action that has underpinned the historical content. That is, logic has history and vice versa. More importantly, in the absence of a discerned logic of the history of a certain thing, it will be impossible to know the history of logic. The logic of the history of things is prior to the history of the logic of things. Therefore, every phenomenon has two sides: its history and its logic. Yet, its logical side, from the perspective of inquiry, precedes the historical side. There is no way to understand a phenomenon's history if its embedding logic is not well defined.
- d. The question of historical action does not mean much when it comes to some facts that are related to the methods. For example, the method of reversing refers to the inversion in the placement of elements in a given construction so that the first element becomes the last and vice versa. Yet, the question about the history of this method does not seem significant in the study of tradition because the meaning of reversing is a terminological state that defines a certain process that does not change over time or place. Hence, its use in Arab-Islamic tradition remains unchangeable. The historicism of reversing should have no significance except in research on the development of the mind among children or human beings in general. For instance, if we trace the development of mental processes among children, we may find that reversing appears at the latest stage of their mental development. We can compare this to the development of the human mind. Thus, we can say that human beings became conscious of the reversing processes ten-thousand years after their separation from the alleged animal lineage. Most methods that I have derived from tradition belong to this category. The fallacy of investigating their history is tantamount to studying the history of reversing in the context of human tradition in general rather than in the context of Arab-Islamic tradition in particular.

In some chapters of your book, you raised objections to the well-known reading of tradition in Arab thought as understood by Mohamed Abed al-Jabri.³ *What are some of the defects or mistakes you associated with his reading of tradition?*

Before dealing with the details of my critique of the view of my colleague professor al-Jabri on tradition, I want to raise two points:

Firstly, my critique of al-Jabri's view aims to correct knowledge, vary its production, and engage in intellectual collaboration to reach the truth. Al-Jabri has himself criticised others such as our colleague professor Abdellah Laroui in the 1970s.⁴ I have committed myself to the most respectful form of disagreeing as established between interlocutors. Moreover, I do not give myself this right to critique others while denying it to my critics when they adhere to scientific conditions and ethical requirements. I do not also obligate anyone to accept my critique until sufficient proof of its validity is presented to him. Similarly, I am not required to accept the claims made by others if no adequate evidence is produced.

Secondly, some people have misunderstood the exigencies of the "principle of difference". Difference does not suggest saying whatever one wishes; otherwise difference will become what is called the concept of laxity (*tasayyub*) which refers to careless words that designate the speech of someone who is indifferent to others. Difference revolves in fact around the right of someone to say what he wants without obliging others to accept it when logical proofs are absent. When I decided to critique al-Jabri, I was convinced that our views converged in valorising the ethics of difference rather than laxity in critiquing. Thus, what rightly applies to his views about criticising others' opinions applies rightly to my own views.

After this clarification, I would like to say that my view of tradition differed from the previous ones. That said, I had to pave the way to establish my own view via the critique of counterviews as is required in research methodology. Otherwise, my silence on this counterview would negatively affect the

3 Taha's conception of *turāth* is based on his critical reaction to Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri's intellectual project, which privileges modern reason and recommends European instrumentalist understanding of rationalism. In his momentous book *Naqd al-'aql al-'arabī* (*Critique of Arab Reason*), al-Jabri argued that the predicament of the Arab mind dates back to the eleventh century when demonstrative reason was sacrificially replaced with mythical legendary thought (*al-fikr al-uṣṭūrī*), allowing gnostic reasoning to prosper.

4 Abdellah Laroui is another contemporary Moroccan thinker who believes that renewal and innovation cannot occur in Arab-Islamic thought without an epistemological rupture with *turāth* and consideration of Western modern thought (al-'Arwī 2005).

scientific value of my personal view. Moreover, history would not forgive my silence. Or, this silence would be interpreted as subsequently regulated by contextual and political circumstances that those who seek the truth should not consider. I was also required to methodologically choose the best witness of such circumstances. I have found the ideal witness in the work of al-Jabri as represented in his three books: *Naḥnu wa-l-turāth* (*We and Tradition*), *Takwīn al-ʿaql al-ʿarabī* (*The Formation of Arab Reason*), and *Bunyāt al-ʿaql al-ʿarabī* (*The Structure of Arab Reason*).

It is clear that in these books al-Jabri claims to perform an epistemological critique of tradition (that is, a critique of the fundamentals of its knowledge). I had to scrutinise this claim and assess this epistemological critique. From this assessment and scrutiny, I have reached the conclusion that al-Jabri's epistemological reading suffers from some stumbling blocks and gaps at the levels of method and information that may eliminate the assumed scientific value of his reading and cast doubt on the soundness of using its curriculum in the field of studying tradition. I have enumerated in my aforementioned book sufficient methodological and cognitive gaps to anticipate the remainder of his problems. Yet, if we wish to serve scientific knowledge and revise the judgment of tradition, more gaps in other contexts should be uncovered. As an illustration of these gaps, we can refer to the source that al-Jabri depended on to construct his theory. He drew on the statement of one contemporary Swiss scholar that "logic is the physics of all subjects." Ironically, he translated this into "logic is the physics of a certain subject." He based his claim of the multiplicity of cognitive systems on such a statement. Thus, it is unreasonable to accept this argument as it is based on the wrong translation.

You have attributed segmentalism to the methodology of al-Jabri. Likewise, you have argued that it used an external apparatus. Can you elaborate on this?

In his research on tradition, al-Jabri used borrowed methods to deal with the concepts of "estrangement", "the cognitive system", "the structure", "the absurd", "axiomatization", and others. This being the case, applying these concepts to the study of tradition will negatively counteract its whole structure. It is obvious that these methods were originally created to deal with other subjects, which are not relevant to tradition, and in response to different contextual conditions. Thus, applying them uncritically would disregard the relevant circumstances of tradition. Such action would present tradition in a form that does not preserve its structure and the interpenetration (*tadākhul*) of its components. It can also split these components and dichotomise them, creating more conflicts than harmony.

In place of such a segmental view, you proposed the integrative perspective. What are its elements and determinants?

The integrative view of tradition I call for tends to approach tradition—methods and contents—for the sake of understanding it as an independent unit as well as a complementary whole whose parts are not divisible. I have worked on sorting out its determinants and assigning its distinctive rules, along with the defects that might ensue from breaching these rules, hoping that my critique of al-Jabri would not detract from interest in the revolutionary and innovative side of my theory of tradition. The following are the most important principles of my integrative view:

Firstly, the principle of discursivity (*tadāwul*) presupposes that every aspect of production in tradition—be it a creed, language, or knowledge—has a distinctive practice that is not found in others. This practice can serve the interest of others as well as the self, and serves present as well as future interests.

Secondly, the principle of interpenetration or interconnection presupposes that the knowledge of tradition engages in the means used to establish the content of tradition, its conveyance, and critique. It engages also in the means used to employ this knowledge. Our judgment of its content is dependent on the outcomes that can be reached by the means used in this practical and informational knowledge.

Thirdly, the principle of alignment (*taqrīb*) assumes that what is borrowed from others is subjected to different corrective transformations both at the level of content as well as form in order to comport with the discursive exigencies of tradition. It is also subjected to the transformations brought about by the advances in scientific knowledge that took place in the Arab-Islamic discursive field compared to the source field—be it Greek, Persian, or Indian.

In many of your books, you have dwelt on a central idea that has a significant implication regarding the imperative to formulate a new tradition instead of being limited to the old one. Will you elaborate on this point?

In my books, I have always wanted to contribute to the building of a new tradition. However, when I observed that readers missed this intention in my writings, I decided to state it openly in my book *al-Lisān wa-l-mīzān* (*Language and Balance*) in the hope that they will understand the steps I followed in building tradition. It is not about upholding tradition at the expense of modern science and its imperatives. By the same token, it is not about upholding modern science to the extent of denying the importance of tradition. Rather, it is about drawing on both of them in a way that enhances their interactivity and mutual

benefits. Mastering modern science, to an extent comparable with that of its creators in the West, is the only viable way to attain legal capabilities or penetrating inquiry (*ijtihād*).

You said earlier that the self can be complete only with the complete integration of tradition. *What is the relationship between the self and tradition?*

Everybody knows that the identity of the self is inseparable from its original tradition. Otherwise, the self would take on an identity that is related to another tradition. Furthermore, there is no possible presence of identity in the absence of a certain existence and creation. Tradition is thus the prerequisite of the self and its prospects of creating. Since the self is actualised only through these conditions, existence and creation, it depends on a number of selected components from tradition. This is realised only when more components come into existence. Its prospects of creation depend on embracing all the components of tradition, with its interpenetrating methods and contents, no matter how different its forms and ranks are. The power of innovation is not dependent on attending to the separate parts, but on embracing the whole. It originally seeks to capture the entire spirit, rather than seizing separate elements of the spirit. We are in dire need of assimilating this whole spirit of tradition so that we acquire the ability to create, produce, and contribute as our forebears did. Or else, we will continue feeding on the leftovers of innovations made by others, in the way and in the amount they wish. Therefore, the self will not be complete without acquiring the predisposition of producing, giving, and existing. No acts of creating or giving are possible without reincarnating a spirit that establishes a connection between the components of the tradition in their totality. Therefore, it is true to claim that the perfection of the spirit is dependent on the perfection of tradition.

Philosophies

Achieving modernity and contemporaneousness rests on our aptitude for creation and initiative



Would you mention some of the problems those who are involved with philosophy in our Arab homeland face? How do these problems prevent them from practising philosophy in the right way?

Undoubtedly, the state of philosophy in the Arab homeland is as degraded as the political situation in this homeland. And that is because it is characterised by extreme imitation and blind dependence. It is rarely possible to find in the works of these philosophers a single philosophical theory that they have advanced without relying on either Eastern or Western philosophy.

This seems true even if they have camouflaged this imitation and dependency with labels that suggest renewal and innovation such as “their embrace of modernity” and support of “the principle of philosophical universalism”. They have failed to make any contributions to modern philosophy, be they at the levels of topic selection, aspect specifications, instrument design, or representation of results. This imitation is clearly elucidated in their mechanical repetition of all the issues that have afflicted the modern Western world, the most recent of which are “the new world order”, “globalisation”, and “heading toward the new millennium”.

Therefore, an Arab philosopher is an imitative thinker who can offer no new insights. He is a dependent learner who has no followers since he imitates others in all his practical decisions without raising any questions about the rationale and requirements of these decisions.

The principle of imitation is built on the premise that the concerns of Westerners should apply to the Arabs as well. This is a wrong principle given the obvious historical and discursive disparity between us and them. Thus, the imitative philosopher tends to support his views with evidence from his masters, as he is unable to prove the validity or invalidity of these views. He is inclined to justify his adoption and dissemination of their ideas and claims no

matter how harmful and unbeneficial they are to him. Arguably, the one who justifies what is made by others, unconscious of how it was made, or how to avoid its negative effects, is analogous to someone who gladly calls for his mind to be taken from him, rather than others taking it by force.

Such deep-seated imitation is liable to lead the philosopher to reckon serious diseases as ultimate cures and grave delusions as ultimate guidance.

I do not have enough space in this context to enumerate all these different flaws which vary in accordance with the different ranges of behaviour and levels of discourse the Arab philosopher has embraced. Thus, I will only mention two major flaws. The first one is related to his philosophical behaviour and the second one is concerned with his philosophical discourse.

The behavioural flaw concerns the confusion between philosophy and politics. This is a grave fallacy that requires extensive discussion beyond the scope of this book. This confusion dominates the work of many so-called "militant thinkers" who adopted hybrid and confused stances that have done serious harm to the Arab homeland. These stances neither reformed the thinking of individuals nor improved their actions. The intellectual corruption and shameful malfunctioning that have afflicted this nation are a stigma hurting every proud Arab or free Muslim. These sicknesses are brought about by the declarations of these intellectuals whose views alter, like chameleons, according to their changing interests. They disgracefully work out all elusive justifications for their tendentious behaviour and opportunistic attitudes.

The confusion between what is philosophical and what is political is based on the belief that the philosopher, like the scholar of politics (the man of politics or rather the politician), is interested in political phenomena. As a matter of fact, politicians are interested in the materialist reality of these phenomena, whereas philosophers are particularly concerned with their moral and ethical values. There is a clear difference between apolitical occurrence and political value. The former is an objective matter whose causes can be managed and whose transformation can be predicted, whereas the latter is a subjective matter that is governed by intention and is related to nothing save recompense. This shows that the philosopher has an exemplary approach to the political phenomenon, and the purpose of his approach is to reach an elevated status. Even if this is not practically achieved the way he wishes, it remains fundamentally an ethical approach. Nonetheless, in the world of politics, morals and ethical considerations are not by necessity present. And if morals are present in certain political acts, their presence will remain accidental rather than essential. The goal will not be these morals themselves, but they will be appropriated for other intentions.

I do not imagine, therefore, a philosopher running an election campaign with unrealisable promises. He cannot also set up a political party, support corrupt members, and oppose others who might be suitable for chief positions. One cannot imagine him occupying a political position and encountering situations that contradict his principles. Even if he really runs a campaign, founds a party, or occupies a position, I do not think he will succeed in any of these unless he consents to “being half a philosopher,” “quasi-philosopher,” or “someone who practises philosophy”. Otherwise, his true personality would be that of a politician disguised in philosopher’s clothing or a cunning person capable of assuming multiple personalities. To be a genuine philosopher is likened to picking thorns with a bare hand. The genuine philosopher is someone who can circumvent the controlling pressures of narrow personal or group interests as practised by the politician; he is someone who can adhere to the vast space of values that celebrate the perfection of the human being as embodied by Plato in his *Republic* or al-Farābī in his *al-Madīna al-fāḍila* (*The Perfect State*) or Ibn Bāja in *Tadbīr al-mutawaḥḥid* (*The Governance of the Solitary*).¹

The real philosopher is by nature a moralist or an ethicist. He does not alter his views or adhere to parties; he does not join parties of the left or the right; he does not negotiate, maneuver, conspire, or collude. He seeks the truth wherever and whenever it exists and is quite ready to embrace it even if it is pronounced by his opponent. Equally, it does not please him to come to the aid of those who agree with him when he does not find truth in their pronouncements. This is the kind of philosopher I want to be. By contrast, the politician is prone to change in line with all these different situations. He never seeks the truth in his opponents’ arguments, nor identifies falsehood in his supporters’ words as that could jeopardise his status. He does not feel guilty or bad when attributing falsehood to his opponents, even when their argument is right. Moreover, he can attribute truth to his supporters or patrons even when they have wrong views. I will never be a politician in this sense unless politics becomes something else.

It is absolutely incorrect to think that a philosopher is a negative person who does not participate in historical events and the process of change, as is often said. This can be elucidated in two ways:

Firstly, engaging in social events and participating in social change has no visible manifestations contrary to what the existing political organisations pur-

1 In *Mabādi’ āra’ ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* (*The Perfect State*), Abū Naṣr al-Farābī claimed that philosophy had found a new meaning and life in the shelter of Islam. Philosophy was for him the guide to the liberty of ethical choices, which can lead to judicious reform of a ruling system and is the key to the perfect city-state.

port. Rather, they may have implicit manifestations. Does not the philosopher, who works diligently and constantly to improve minds and morals, participate in these events and social change generally? Certainly not! Can we equate his contribution to the one whose mission is limited to enhancing bodies and judgments?

Secondly, given the fact that the philosopher is concerned with all facets of human existence, how can one disregard his involvement with politics, which revolves around wielding authority over human existence? His preoccupation with politics is not limited to a certain position for the purpose of attaining power for one's own self, sharing power, or alternating it with others. Quite the contrary, his concern with power is approached from all positions in his country or in other countries. He traces its rules and developments; he enumerates its advantages and disadvantages in a way that elucidates lessons and evidence. This is supposed to sustain him in identifying the necessary values and goals for saving human beings from the harms that may ensue from political practice in this context. He, therefore, takes the responsibility of looking philosophically into and calling for these values and goals to bring about peace in people's minds. He can both save humanity from self-destruction and degradation and raise it to a level of greater perfection.

The rhetorical flaw that the imitative Arab philosopher faces is embodied in the separation between philosophy and logic. This fallacy is less serious than the damages caused by the confusion between politics and philosophy. It is not surprising that those thinkers who fall into this mix-up, call for such a separation between philosophy and logic. Confusion occurs when these thinkers succeed in weakening the logical capabilities of their audience.

There are two actual reasons behind their call for separating philosophy and logic. The first one is germane to their incorrect view of logic, which they consider an extraneous and disposable element for philosophy. Indeed, there is no possible knowledge—philosophical or not—in the absence of a controlling logic. The content of philosophy entails the existence of a certain method which is, in essence, its controlling logic. Thus, philosophy, like any other subject, cannot evade logic. More than that, the beginning of philosophy coincides with a parallel awareness of the great significance of logic. There has been a renewed awareness of the importance of logic in the modern stage of philosophy's development. Logic is more connected to philosophy than to other sorts of human knowledge, including political knowledge.

Supposing that some Western philosophers have started to neglect the methods of logical accuracy in their problematics and argumentation, as is the case with some modern French writings that are dominated by imagination rather

than systematisation, we should not, as Arabs, emulate this negligence regarding accuracy. What is taken for granted about the Western view is that it is steeped in logical methods. When they abandoned some of them, they ascribed this abandoning to the existence of harbingers of new logical elements. In contrast, the foundation of our contemporary thinkers' position is not steeped in logical methods. When they have to abandon some logical methods, they are unable to establish a new logic. Arguably, those who cannot formulate their arguments in line with a recognised logic, which the majority of philosophers follow, would remain equally unable to formulate them in the new logic they would invent, and they would definitely end up in intellectual chaos that would harm their readers, exacerbate their loss, and reduce their reasoning capability.

The second cause is related to the fact that Arab thinkers do not have sufficient knowledge of logic. They usually focus their attention on the intellectual content of the concepts of modernity and its condition without attending to the logical principles on which they were built or the methodological means used to convey these concepts. They only copy these conditions and concepts from their Western peers, unaware of how to formulate similar modern concepts. They fail to control these conditions in a way that empowers their productivity. They cannot, subsequently, put these concepts and conditions in one inclusive system capable of generation. This is principally due to their lack of logical training. Even those who have written textbooks on logic have developed no method to employ them in constructing logic-based thought. In the best cases, they emulate the findings that Western thinkers have reached in their specific approach to logic. Examples of these findings are their denial of metaphysical issues or their arguments for the ambiguity of philosophical language (with a view to the situation of logic).

This kind of logical looseness in the writing of Arab thinkers is responsible for giving their readers the idea that philosophical writing is not different from literary composition or journalistic writing. As a consequence, readers are inclined to read philosophical essays in the same way they read the morning newspaper or the evening news stories. That is, they do not pay any attention or exert any mental effort. This harms the discretionary ability of the Arab people because the mind that does not exert itself diligently cannot carefully judge anything.

Philosophical thought in the Arab world suffers from two problems. The first concerns the lack of innovation while the second concerns the lack of contemplation in the philosopher's work. In your project *Fiqh al-falsafa* (Understanding Philosophy) you have called for philosophical innova-

tion. What are the requirements of this innovation? How do you approach the problematics of everyday life in the philosophical endeavour?

This is a worthy question because it reflects the intellectual concerns I have had for many years. The answer to the question that you raised is: “The lack of philosophical innovation” and the “absence of concern with everyday life or worldly matters” are basically the same problem since concerns with everyday life are a requisite precondition for philosophical innovation. I have been pre-occupied with this second issue for a long time: How can the Arab philosopher become an innovator? To be an innovator, I think he should be more connected to what I call “his discursive context”. By this I mean his everyday-life context with all its constituents and determinants, values, knowledge, problems, worries, horizons, and related aspects of reality. I see the word “discursivity” as essentially referring to the practical, not theoretical, conditions and factors that predetermine this everyday life. These factors are group-related and not individual-centred; they are variable rather than stable.

My aim in my different works is basically to attain philosophical innovation by way of connecting with everyday discursivity. I have scrutinised Arabic philosophical texts and found many flaws and shortcomings, which made me return to the philosophical texts in their original languages to see how the philosopher put forward his concepts, formulated his judgments, and built his theory. That is, I observed him in his quotidian laboratory creating his personal philosophy. I had to assume the position of a scientist when dealing with the philosopher. I observed him from outside. For this reason, I called my book *Understanding Philosophy*; that is to say, looking at philosophy as a rhetorical phenomenon that the philosopher practises, using its various methods and contents. I could have titled the book “The Philosophical Technique”.

The first step in this project was to assess philosophical translation. I have observed the philosopher’s practice of translation from one language into another. I have also looked into the methods used by the Arabs and have concluded that we have to achieve innovative translation in order to help the Arab audience acquire the ability to philosophise, which entails making philosophy accessible to them. That is, we must bring it closer to their everyday life so that they will be able to understand the content of philosophy the same way they understand matters related to their life. Only then will we see the impact of philosophy on their everyday behaviour.

I am certain that we should not content ourselves with only one way of translating philosophical texts. We must establish several methods of translating texts, taking into account the different stages of the receiver’s acquisition of philosophical competence. The first range of these methods should bring the

receiver closer to the basic meanings of the original text. That is, these basic meanings should be matched with the meanings existing in the everyday life of the receiver. They should sound familiar to him so that he comes to consider them as parts of what normally constitutes his knowledge.

If all these connections take place, they would be able to interact with the receiver's concepts. That is to say, the borrowed meaning would become an active agent in the received text. I have called this first stage "the foundational translation" whose aim is to familiarise the receiver with the original text. Then, we move to the stage I refer to as "the communicative (connective) translation" whereby we translate the contents of the original philosophical text in their entirety including those that do not seem to be connected to the everyday life of the receiver. The latter acquires, through the first translation, the basics that pave the way for accepting the contents that have no direct connection with the everyday discursive field. That is, he would accept it through an intermediary content. When this Arab receiver is ready to accept the original contents, including those that are unfamiliar, it will be possible to move to the third stage I call the "ultimate translation" whereby all the words of the original texts are translated, one by one, until the receiver becomes conscious of the specificity of the original language and will accept it through the aforementioned intermediary content.

As is the case with any new views, my opinion regarding philosophical translation has elicited various reactions. In fact, I have made philosophical translation a particular goal without which this translation will remain a mess, and my intention has been to enable the Arab receiver to philosophise in the translated text. For this reason, I advocate following a special pedagogical method to equip the Arab receiver with this faculty of philosophising.

This method consists of not exposing the receiver to the entire original text all at once. We must gradually introduce this text until the receiver can engage with its contents in their entirety. We begin by translating what he is interested in and comfortable with. Then we can proceed to translate what he is cognitively less familiar with. The philosopher becomes progressively more able to engage with the original text and make use of it in accordance with his goals. The philosophy that we received in the past was mediated by memorisation. The philosophy that I am calling for today aims to change the mind, and this cannot be done all at once. The mind has to be trained to engage in philosophy. This cognitive philosophical training takes considerable time. Moreover, the philosophy that I envision should train the mind to philosophise gradually.

More than other conceptions, this conception of philosophical practice deserves the label "modernity". In Arabic, modernity initially means creation, and creation literally means to do something. Later, modernity comes to indic-

ate re-creation, which literally means to seek in yourself what is modern. Anyone who claims modernity and has no new thought that comes from himself, or no manifestation of his thought in his behaviour, is not worthy of making this claim. He is, on the contrary, an imitator.

The truth of modernity is that it creates the new and modern; that is, the act of innovation. Philosophical modernity is philosophical behaviour that leads a person to innovative philosophical action. I have reiterated in my books that modernity is not about imitating others in their words and actions. Rather, it is about coming up with what can compete with others' production and innovation. I have striven in my various books to be a modernist in this sense and have worked diligently to uncover the mechanisms of innovative action. My entire project revolves around this goal: "enabling the Arabs to philosophise".

Your aim behind raising this communicative dimension of philosophical innovation is to effect a sort of interaction with the Arab audience. However, you write in a language that readers and researchers in this field are not familiar with. How do you justify this undertaking?

This question is no less pertinent than the previous one. I can respond to it in different ways and will mention just a few. First, I see "the level of philosophical innovation" and "the level of theorising for this innovation" as different levels. To elaborate on this, I would say that considering something is not the same as producing something. Thus, the language that I have used to advance my theory of philosophical innovation is quite accurate with regard to the content and terminological techniques. However, the language I have used in formulating an innovative philosophy lacks this accuracy, rather, it is accessible and familiar—even though philosophy is generally known for its particular language. In my writings, I do not labour to formulate a specialised philosophy as much as I labour to explain to the Arabs seeking to become authentic philosophers the way this philosophy can be formulated. Therefore, my language is closer to scientific language than to philosophical language.

The second response to your question is that there is nothing more abhorrent than words and expressions that have become trite, vulgar language that has no quality, especially that which is mere imitation of others and not innovation initiated by the Arab nation. Hence, I do not hesitate to employ terms and constructions that bring about astonishment; I do not resort to language that is strange to our ears and expectations. I tend to emulate the practice of writers and philosophers in their love of genuine words. Perhaps this is owing to my early experience with poetic innovation, when I was smitten by the words the lover speaks to his beloved. Perhaps, it is also owing to my later obsession with

contemplating the wonder of language. If not for language, there would be no human beings. Still another reason may be the association of my earlier literary endeavours with my later philosophical concerns.

The third answer to your question is that I have found the philosophical language used in modern Arabic books very poor and suffering from arbitrary translation; there are no philosophical efforts to come up with Arabic equivalents. But the selection of Arabic equivalents should be philosophy-based; otherwise, they will be useless. These arbitrary translations have paralyzed the internal logic of Arabic philosophical language and interrupted its autonomous dynamicity. Thus, I took it upon myself to expand this language, free its internal logic, and bring about the rebirth of its autonomous dynamicity.

Therefore, you see me employing the semantic and derivational potential of the Arabic language. In my employment of this potential, I have avoided drawing on the modes of foreign languages, which is what most Arab philosophers do. I have also attempted to sort out argumentative and expressive forms from tradition and have become convinced that these forms are incomparable to any forms in our modern language, with particular regard to logical practicability and expression of philosophical meanings. They do that by strictly adhering to the requirements of knowledge specific to our continuously renewed era and in fulfilment of the requirement of rhetoric specific to our Arabic language. My language can be understood only when one stops drawing on the mediatory assistance of foreign languages and instead immerses oneself in Arabic roots.

Is not this a kind of intertextuality with Heidegger when he urged for a return to the language of philosophy, Greek, in order to understand the meaning of philosophical action?

As you know, I have been interested in philosophy for more than three decades. Anyone working in the field of philosophy must consider philosophical thought in all its diverse aspects if intending to produce something rather than imitate others. Moreover, Heidegger's philosophical opinion on the matter you have mentioned is not esoteric or extraordinary. All philosophers return to the linguistic roots of their terminology and employ them in constructing their ideas, whether they state that or not. This is because the speech of philosophers has a long history which consists of layers of interconnected meanings. In principle, the philosopher wishes to return to these layers one by one. He looks at language the way we look at a living organism. That is, it is an organism that bears a history, or if you wish a living memory.

Therefore, we find that most philosophers tend to return to the middle layers of this semantic history. Others return to the layer which immediately precedes

the layer they are studying. While others attempt to return to the earliest initial layer possible. This is what Heidegger in fact did when he returned to the oldest Greek texts to derive inspiration from their philosophical effluences and impulses—as if he intended by this to revive in his thoughts his past, present, and future all in one action. Consequently, he plunged deeper into the past in order to penetrate further into future horizons.

I assert that there is no philosopher who has particularly influenced my thought to the extent that I express my adherence to his philosophy and denote him as my favourite philosopher. Though I have been impressed by this or that great philosopher owing to his tremendous intellect and vast understanding. My acquaintance with philosophy is comparable to that of someone who wants to know all the secrets of the philosophical field that these philosophers do not reveal to others. On other occasions, my acquaintance is analogous to that of someone looking forward to catching up with these philosophers while they are immersed in their philosophical work. I think this is what anyone does who seeks to set an understanding of philosophy in the sense I have identified.

The fourth answer to your previous question concerning my unfamiliar use of language for the reader, is that I follow in my philosophical writing a special method called “inferential writing”. My writings do not follow the narrative, historical, or reporting style. Rather, it is “systemic writing” which was and is still used in constructivist or synthetic philosophical practice. We cannot, for example, read a Kantian text without discerning the inferential structure of his work. Nor can we read modern Anglo-Saxon writings generally without identifying this inferential method I follow. Illustrations of this kind of writing can be found in the works of pioneer Muslim scholars of jurisprudence such as al-Ghazālī in his book *al-Mustasfā min ‘ilm al-uṣūl* (*On Legal Theory of Muslim Jurisprudence*).

What are the components of this inferential writing you have referred to?

In this type of writing it is imperative that the author not start the process of writing until he becomes acquainted with all the issues related to the subject matter he wants to tackle. In so doing, the fundamental topic, which should precede the details, becomes clear to him. Then he engages in constructing his book the way an engineer constructs his building. His work is akin to a solid structure whose parts are strongly interlinked. Therefore, it is not beneficial to read this work by scanning middle or random sections or skipping paragraphs. It should instead be read from the beginning to the end; it should be dealt with step by step until one becomes aware of the way some parts reproduce others.

One must carefully consider the evidence the philosopher has used to prove points in connection with his thesis statement. Most of my books, and even my shortest essays, are written following the inferential method as if each one is an independent system. I start writing only once I have completely understood my subject. Then follows my own logical presentation of it to my readers in accordance with scientific requirements.

However, I keep to myself how I discover the truth of my subjects such as the details of how I am guided to a certain truth at a certain time, in a given circumstance, in a certain manner, or for a certain reason. And then they pass from my memory after a time. What matters most in the building of science is not the stage of discovery, which is most often related to history; it is the stage of inference that is of paramount importance. Nonetheless, in the case of modern Arabic philosophical writing, there is generally a tendency to follow the method of discovery. The philosopher engages in the historicising of ideas, instead of building them. The inferential method is more strenuous than discovery because it is the outcome of a second endeavour in addition to the first one. It is more demanding for the mind because it necessitates a second understanding as well.

I feel sometimes that a microscopic tendency that is represented in a strictly logical language, and that is obsessed with investigation and theorising, would deter a lot of unspecialised intellectuals from understanding the significant characteristics and goals of your project ... I am worried that it would be accessible only to academic elites.

Some people might think that writing entails both addressing the audience and getting involved in their concerns. In my opinion, this is not true. The writer can engage in the concerns of the audience without using a discourse that is understood by the public. He might engage with these concerns in an accurate way that only a particular group discerns; the reason for this is that understanding the details of these concerns can only be attained through meticulous methods. This means the writer has two options: Either to create writings that address the audience with no due consideration to the scientific and methodological requirements—but this would pander to the whims and views of the audience, and he would end up abandoning all scientific and methodological considerations; or to create a kind of writing that seeks to construct knowledge and aims at the truth. He would, thereby, conform to the scientific conditions and methodological requirements. Thus, only specialist receivers and a few readers who are up to date on the evolution of knowledge would be capable of understanding it. Proof is provided in scientific writings from different branches of

knowledge. These writings do not address the general audience; however, their findings benefit this audience.

Unfortunately, some writers who can only create audience-oriented writing have deluded themselves and others into thinking that their writings are explicitly scientific and benefit public and specialist audiences alike. The truth of the matter is that when the writer resorts to the use of ubiquitous media to disseminate his ideas and impose his media authority, his writings do not contribute to the development of science and instead cater to the audience in a way that serves their interests.

I do not think that I would have been able to engage in arguing for the integration of tradition if I had limited myself to addressing the general audience. If I had committed myself to that cause, I would not have gone beyond informing the audience of the main results I have achieved. The audience would have received them as controlling reports rather than justified demands. The truth is that the audience has its own discourse, and scientific research has its own discourse. These discourses are in no way equal even if it is possible to transfer some scientific truths to the audience in an approximate discourse devoid of any evidence or method of construction. One can devote a section of the book to such an approximate discourse that cannot fulfil the requirements of scientific discourse. Nonetheless, if the writer can be required to address the audience according to its level or below it, he can also be required to address this audience in a way that raises its level. I chose to elevate my readers rather than lower the level of scientific discourse.

Yes, you talked in your book about diverse rationalities (reasons) rather than one. What are the manifestations of this diversity? Is it possible to talk about demonstrative philosophy?

Indeed, most of my books refer to this diversity of rationalities in two ways. The first is related to scientific data that only arrogant thinkers contest. The second is an essential postulate that is more particular to me. It is the idea that reason is an action rather than an entity. The purpose behind this insistence is essentially to free the Arab mind (reason) from its dependence on the intellectual rationality of others and make it strive to create its own rationality. More than that, if you look a little closer at my books with regard to this issue you will notice that my references to rational diversity become more striking as we move from one book to another.

For instance, in my book *Fī uṣūl al-ḥiwār wa-tajdīd ʿilm al-kalām* (*On the Fundamentals of Dialogue and Renovation of Islamic Theology*), I have focused on the existence of at least two types of reason. The first one is “demonstrat-

ive reason" (*burhānī*) which governs the scientific practice inside laboratories, factories, observatories, and academic institutions. It controls scientific discourse generally and has no immediate impact on everyday life. The other is "argumentative reason" (*ḥijābī*) which governs the daily transactional relationship between people and controls natural discourse in general. On the basis of this division, I can answer your question about the possibility of talking about demonstrative philosophy. If by the latter we mean a philosophy that is based on groups of evidence that meet the same logical requirements found in the exact sciences, I will say this philosophy is inexistent although a number of philosophers such as Aristotle, Averroes, Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz insisted on its existence. One reason for this is the fact that philosophical language is never too scientific to the extent of making us think it uses difficult demonstrative evidence. Rather, it is a natural language and there is no doubt that natural language uses only simple evidence of an argumentative nature.

Therefore, philosophy should be a straight argumentative discourse, rather than a demonstrative discourse as those philosophers and their imitators claimed. Anyone who is acquainted with the secrets of evidence can verify effortlessly the technical considerations through which philosophical evidence is made purely argumentative. There is nothing wrong or humiliating about a philosophy that has this argumentative-rational nature. On the contrary, it makes the content of philosophy richer, more penetrating, and interactive with everyday matters. Philosophy can also derive from it the principles of renewing and innovation.

Concerning my book *al-'Amal al-dīnī wa-tajdīd al-'aql (Religious Practice and the Renewal of Reason)*, I have distinguished between three types of rationalities.

Firstly, "abstracted reason or rationality" (*al-'aqlāniyya al-mujarrada*) still bears traces of intensity of sensation. This firmly contradicts the dominant view among laymen and especially philosophers who claim that abstracted reason is devoid of sensation. Indeed, "abstracted reason" only disposed of the content of sensation, whereas the images and forms that accompany these contents of sensation stay intact. That is, this reason appears as a group of structures that have cognitive roots. Within this reason, we find the whole demonstrative reason and part of the argumentative reason.

Secondly, "guided reason or rationality" (*al-'aqlāniyya al-musaddada*) is regenerated through its involvement with scientific practice; it especially attains certainty in the goals it seeks to achieve, and the remaining part of "the argumentative reason" belongs to it.

Thirdly, "enhanced or supported reason" (*al-'aqlāniyya al-mu'ayyada*) results from further involvement in actual practice; it especially attains certainty

not only in the advantages of the targeted goals but also in the success of the means that are used to achieve these goals. With this we can include also “the denotative reason” (*al-‘aqlāniyya al-ishāriyya*).

As for my book *Language and Balance*, I went further in arguing for the multiplicity of reasons. I have coined a new term to address this new sense, which is *al-takāthur al-‘aqlī* (multiplication of reason). It has become clear to me, with no possibility for doubt, that rational actions remain the most fluctuating and transformative actions within the sphere of cognitive actions. They fluctuate not only in line with the various stages of human history; what was rational in the previous eras can be irrational in later eras. Furthermore, it can even fluctuate in different stages with regard to a single individual; for what used to be rational in a certain stage may be irrational in another stage and vice versa. It does not stop at temporal changes. It touches also on spatial changes, for a rational thing may exist in a certain intellectual domain, or logical system, and may not in other domains or systems; it may also be rational in one aspect but not in another and vice versa. I am certain that there are too many types of reasons to count. Counting them is akin to counting all human actions in all their times and places. To argue for the existence of only one type of reason is analogous to compounding all human actions into one action, which is certainly the most myopic view.

Logics

No right and rational knowledge is possible without a prior controlling logic.



The name of Professor Taha Abderrahmane is associated with logic and its philosophy. Will you tell us about the motives for this association and your choice of this philosophical research area?

The association of my name with logic and my choice of its methodologies and philosophy can be ascribed to two motives:

The first is related to my teaching experience in the subject of logic at the Faculty of Humanities in Rabat. Since I joined the faculty in 1970, I was assigned to teach this subject, which the late Najīb Baladī taught previously. I took it upon myself to improve the teaching of this subject. The improvement took different forms. I substituted modern logic for ancient logic, which is a kind of symbolic arithmetical language based on mathematical methodologies. Its accuracy and abstraction are greater than those found in mathematics itself. In addition, it integrates the most accurate elements in the Aristotelian law of logic in the chapter on “predicative propositions” (the logic of perceptions or the logic of concepts) and the most correct element in the law of stoic logic in the chapter on “the logic of judgement or assent (*taṣḍīq*)” or “the logic of propositions”.

Later, I undertook the Arabising of several terms and concepts belonging to this mathematical logic, either by directly quoting them from the Arab-Islamic tradition or by inspiration from the tradition to Arabise them. My Arabic equivalents sound familiar to the Arabic speaker despite their novelty and the recency of their content. They roll off his tongue and are close to his understanding. Third, I have worked hard to increase the teaching hours and scope of the subject of logic. The teaching of this material deals with three areas: the method of logic, the history of logic, and the philosophy of logic. Moreover, it is no longer limited to the philosophy major and has begun to be taught for the Arabic language and literature major.

The second motive for the association of my name with logic is related to my academic interests, research, and writings in logic. The topic of my doctoral dissertation was the use of the tools of modern logic in studying the phenomena of language. I have also written two books: *Formal Logic and Grammar*, which tackles the relationship between logic and linguistics; and *On the Fundamentals of Dialogue and Renovation of Theology* in which I advanced a symbolic logical formulation for the method of debate among Muslims, in addition to various essays, one of which is on al-Ghazālī's notion of causality from the perspective of the possible worlds theory (*al-Munāẓara, Debate Journal*, N 1–2.). In this essay, I refuted the common claims related to al-Ghazālī's concept of causality (*sababiyya*), using an extensive logical analysis of this problem. It was an unprecedented analysis.

Professor Taha works vigorously in the field of terminology and concepts. Why is that? Is it related to your background in logic or linguistics?

It is true that the status of terminology in modern Arab-Islamic production matters a great deal to me. To clarify the motive for this interest, I will start by distinguishing between two stages in the practice of terminology. The stage of consuming foreign terminology and the stage of producing original terminology. Modern Arab production remains fixed at the stage of consuming foreign terminology. The followers of this camp grasp the borrowed terminology which appears in different translations with varying scientific values. At the level of producing the original terminology, I am not sure they have grasped its requirements. By this terminology, I mean the researcher comes up with the terminology, and then he completely defines its procedural characteristics. Thus, for the researcher, this terminology has either a descriptive, analytical, or interpretive value. And it is true that he cannot reach this stage if he does not acquire the ability to "theorise". That is, he has to acquire the logical skill of building the methods, theories, and models according to his needs.

Hence, I took it upon myself to explore the stage of producing terminology at the logical and philosophical levels. In so doing, I abided by the following criteria:

- a. To draw on the most recent theoretical and methodological requirements and parameters used in formulating scientific terminology.
- b. To invest in the expressive and rhetorical possibilities inherent in the Arabic language, which have not yet been investigated in philosophical writings.
- c. To abide by the practical guidelines in the Arab-Islamic tradition that have contributed to maintaining its particular specificity.

Perhaps the researcher abiding by these criteria will acquire the ability to produce a distinct and renovative philosophical thought. He does not depend on foreign terminologies. For example, he does not discuss the concepts others have discussed. He builds his own concepts independently from them. If it happens that he discusses a borrowed meaning such as “modernity”, he will not by necessity copy it from the source terminologies. It is possible, therefore, that he will re-create from these terminologies new values and meanings which can guide our departure from backwardness, without drawing on the values and meanings that guided the West toward modernity and are applied in their societies.

The act of chasing foreign terminology impedes its efficiency and productivity within the arena of the host intellectual practice because this terminology carries traces of foreign origin. It remains a part of the cognitive network connected to this origin. The Arab user of this terminology must evoke those traces whenever he wants to work on it. As a result, he will not be able to achieve innovation by way of using this terminology. In addition, the Arabic equivalent may enter into other cognitive and conceptual relationships that are not connected to the cognitive constituents of foreign terminology. Subsequently, the Arab user of this terminology finds himself obliged to seek guidance in the source/foreign terminology. This kind of recourse will be repeated whenever there appear new aspects of this terminology’s productivity in its source context.

In the history of Islamic intellectual practice, logic was compared by some scholars to heresy, “zandaqa”. What do you think about this judgment?

In reality, logic was treated unfairly in the past. I assure you that some scholars still perpetuate this unfairness. The best proof is that the teaching of logic is banned in some Arab-Islamic universities. For some people, the saying “those who use logic engage in heresy” has become a catchphrase. This may justify their common association of old logic with the name philosophy. That is to say, “those who are concerned with philosophy may be involved with heresy.” Apparently, scholarly interest in philosophy has been often seen as a source of suspicion and disagreement. Additionally, some ancient logicians sidestepped the parameters of the Arab-Islamic discursive field. This refers to the set of principles and general rules which govern belief, language, and knowledge, and which constitute the belief system of all those who belong to Arab-Islamic society.

At the level of belief, some philosophers attempted, under the excuse of using demonstrative logic (reason), to argue for ideas that go against Sharia

such as “eternity of the world”, and “God’s ignorance of particulars” (God Almighty is above their description). At the level of language, some of them chose ways of expression that are not familiar to the Arabs’ habits of clarification and brevity. At the level of knowledge, some of them spoke of matters that are not supported by evidence, do not have any benefits, and are not based on the principles of Islamic law.

Indeed, those attitudes—that either stand against logic or misuse it (which subsequently sidestep the Arab-Islamic discursive requirements)—suggest the incapability of those who have those attitudes to understand the nature of the science of logic and its methods. This science is no more than a “set of artificial methods that are useful in classification, synthesising, and theorising”. It has basically nothing to do with (un)truthfulness of belief. Some Muslim scholars like al-Ghazālī were aware of this fact. Logic is itself innocent of heresy. It becomes heresy when it is employed for a certain agenda, or exploited in a way that is opposed to Sharia. No one can deny that logic provides us with incomparable tools—in terms of accuracy, exactitude, and depth—for analysis and synthesis. Added to this, we can refer to another fact related to the necessity of using logic in describing the aims of Sharia. That is, given the instrumentality (*adātiyya*) of logic, its use in reading the contents of scripture enables us to attend to details that are not reachable through other means, as long as the researcher is guided by the light of Islamic law. We can, therefore, state that “all that is subjected to the law of Islam and logic is realisable.”

You are considered the father of logic in Morocco. My question is this, how can we now employ logic for educational and intellectual purposes? Why do not we teach logic to secondary school students? Normally we are supposedly obliged to teach students logic and reasoning at an early age.

I am grateful for your positive attitude toward logic; nevertheless, the dominant perception of logic is negative, if not downright hostile, owing to the following erroneous arguments:

The first argument I denote “the argument of the volitional (*ikhtiyārīyyāt*) logic”. This means that the person has the choice to practise logic. However, logic is not an option. It is rather an obligation for anyone who has a mind (reason) since this does not work in the absence of logic. Those who think otherwise are either without a mind or do not grasp what it really means to possess a mind.

I call the second argument “the particularity (*juz’īyyāt*) of logic”. This means that logic is limited only to a certain area of knowledge. It has a limited scope as it is used in the field of science and philosophy but is not allowed in jur-

isprudence and politics. This is an incorrect view because there is no area of knowledge in which the mind (reason) operates without its necessary, guiding logic.

I call the third argument “the luxuries (*kamāliyyāt*) of logic”. It claims that logic is a mere luxury and adornment to improve our speeches and writings. Thus, there is no harm or embarrassment if we do not use it. This is again debatable; since the mind (reason) cannot be considered an adornment it is likewise not right to consider logic a mere adornment.

So, what is logic? It simply means that one requires a certain manner to perform what one thinks or wants to express. This manner has its own organising rules that regulate the speaker’s thoughts and expressions. If this manner is not observed, one’s expressions will lack harmony. Thus, learning about this manner, in this case, becomes an individual rather than a collective obligation. It is the guarantee that the mind will work correctly and efficiently. This manner of thinking and expressing is what we specifically call logic. Anyone who praises reason and disparages logic falls into contradiction. It is like saying “I am logical, but I do not have logic”, or saying “I am rational, but I do not have reason.” It has been proven that there must be a practice of logic in all types and levels of thinking, expressing, and behaving from childhood to old age, if not to the end of life.

Some scientific discoveries, especially in physics, have started to refute some of the constants in formal logic. For instance, we find in the latest discovery in atomic physics that one thing can exist simultaneously in two places. This is an obvious infringement of the general principle of contradiction, which is considered one of the laws deemed among the constants of human thought. How do you now evaluate formal logic?

I want to raise attention to the fact that the label “formal logic” is somehow misleading; why? It suggests that logic is stable and does not develop, and the truth is that logic has been through various stages. I want to say here that logic is today witnessing colossal developments that are not at all easily understandable. There have been different types of logical patterns in different fields of knowledge, including literary fields. For instance, the “law of identity,” the “law of non-contradiction,” and the “law of excluded middle or third” were deemed to be unavoidable and final cognitive principles. However, some of these overriding principles of logic were annulled. A case in point is what is known as “inconsistency logic” which is an arithmetical logic that does not observe the law of non-contradiction. That is, we look at its postulates as including two contradictory elements.

Therefore, we cannot say that there are fixed laws that constitute the principles of reason. The thing that remains stable is that when you choose your postulates and their deductive rules, you have to abide by them until the end in the arrangement of results. Subsequently, reason is no more than a kind of abiding by the patterns you have chosen. Reason is, thus, not one entity. It can be understood as a number of reasons, not in the individual or group senses, but in its procedural sense. That is, every pattern constitutes a certain reason. Reasons vary in tandem with the variance of patterns. That is why I have continued reminding the readers of my books that reason, in contradistinction to the common belief among both the elite and common audience, is not an inherent entity in human beings. Rather, it is an action that originates in humans such as the actions of hearing, seeing, and speaking. There is no material or scientific criterion proving the existence of an independent entity called reason. There is only you, the human being I am talking to. From you, there come various perceptual manifestations. This view is supported by the fact that actions develop while entities remain stable. If reason were a stable entity, it would not develop. It can never develop in isolation from hearing and seeing; it must then be an action. It represents the actional nature.

Can you elaborate on Ibn Taymiyya's critique of Aristotelian logic?

Ibn Taymiyya was not a normal logician. He was an innovative logician who argued against many of the fundamentals attributed to the logic of Aristotle. He worked diligently and reasoned carefully to come up with a new logic that is closer to the discursive field of everyday routine than to abstract philosophical language. I am saddened that neither his supporters nor his non-fundamentalist opponents made use of the logical thinking of Ibn Taymiyya. For Ibn Taymiyya produced new views in logic worth considering and analyzing. His contribution to logic was more innovative than that of the logicians who preceded him including prominent philosophers such as al-Farābī and Avicenna because all these philosophers remained imprisoned by Aristotle's fundamentals. If there was anything new in their thought, it was strictly connected to these Aristotelian fundamentals.

By contrast, Ibn Taymiyya tried to advance the fundamentals of new logic to replace those used by Aristotle. For instance, he opposed the idea that analogy (*qiyās*) consists of three terms and three propositions, and he considered necessity the main relationship that determines the subject of logic. Other Salafists did not employ such matters to advance a theory in Islamic logic because they did not grasp much of his logic. They contented themselves with regurgitating his speeches. Besides, they were not equipped with a modern repertoire of logic

that could allow them to understand fully Ibn Taymiyya's immense contribution to this field. Similarly, the non-Salafists did not have sufficient training in logic. Their dogmatic attitudes against Ibn Taymiyya impeded their investment in his logic. In fact, his logic was practical, alive, and empirical, unlike the fixed and formal logic that Aristotle produced.

In your dealing with logical, linguistic, and philosophical questions, we noticed the presence of some means or methods belonging to jurisprudence, can you explain the reasons behind the use of these means?

Your question is apt. Yes, this jurisprudence methodology is indeed present in my work, owing to several factors:

Firstly, I consider this methodology the Islamic logical contribution that is not Aristotelian and is evident generally in the Arab-Islamic tradition. In this vein, I claimed in *Language and Balance* that jurisprudence is part of logic, in opposition to al-Ghazālī's argument that logic is part of jurisprudence.

Secondly, this methodology has contributed to the study of the phenomenon of discourse in an impressive way. It comprises scientific means whose procedural benefits are still relevant.

Thirdly, this methodology has an encyclopedic nature in that it forms a space where multiple sciences intersect. It was absolutely the most common Islamic methodology.

Fourthly, I have intended in my various research endeavours to renew and continue the Islamic intellectual contribution, which entails a connection with past intellectual work without causing it to stagnate. I have found jurisprudence the best approach, among the various facets of Islamic methodology, to fulfil this task owing to its openness, innovation, and integration.

Linguistics

Our training in different languages was a decisive factor in elucidating the clear effects of the language structures the philosopher discusses in his dogmatic and intellectual doctrine.



To begin, we would like to ask Dr Taha Abderrahmane to talk about his scientific project, the stages he has gone through to complete it, along with possibilities of future research in the area of linguistics and logic studies.

I can say that this project is concerned with the reality of research in the Arab-Islamic tradition, with a particular focus on its underlying scientific methods. This kind of research was previously dominated by those who followed methodologies that I consider unreliable for these reasons:

1. They are borrowed rather than connected methodologies. This means that they do not meet the requirements of the subject they are applied to. This is manifested in the following:
 - a. They are borrowed from other intellectual fields and are applied in another area without any revision of their procedural characteristics or observation of the logical specificities of this area.
 - b. They are disconnected from the means of tradition and the ways it is revolutionised, given their failure to achieve methods of extending and benefiting from this tradition.
2. These methodologies are foreign; they are not complete or pure. By this, I mean that their logic is corrupted. This corruption is manifested in the following areas:
 - a. They broke, in a general way, the convention of written texts. Since they relied in their judgment on “written texts” they had to abide by the logical and linguistic convention of the “written text”. Obviously, they dealt with these texts as if they were external and material subjects similar to historical, political, social, and economic phenomena.
 - b. Particularly, they did not abide by the logical convention of the Islamic text. They overlooked the fact that Islamic thought in all its

areas is replete with the methods of logical deduction/inference and the methods of reasoning, which are practised with precision and unusual skill. I do not think that it is possible to fully understand this thought and fully explain it without extracting its method of deductive construction.

- c. They led to the belief in the possibility of forsaking theoretical logical training. With the result that research suffered many shortcomings such as lack of specification, (that is, unleashing the tendencies for sweeping generalisations), lack of consistency (that is, delving into scattered details of fragmented issues), and lack of concentration (that is, reckless engagement with streams of superfluous speaking).

My project aims to protect my methods from these contradictions that can be subsumed under two flaws: imitation (*naql*) and intervening (*dakhl*). I wanted these methods, on the one hand, to have a connection with Islamic texts. That is, I draw on the logical linguistic methods the purveyors of these Islamic texts followed in their dissertations, analyses, claims, and contentions. All this should be accomplished with careful consideration of the historical gap between us and them. For instance, they drew on the methods of logic relevant to their time (i.e., Aristotelian logic) and the methods of verbal argumentation they created. For my part, I draw on the method of modern arithmetic logic and the methods of contemporary argumentative-rational theories.

I also wanted these methods to be complete and their aspects to match the properties of the subject they deal with. The subject of tradition is constructed logically and linguistically. It cannot be sufficiently described or completely explained if the descriptive means are not of a logical and linguistic nature. These are the means I used in my project.

I aimed by means of these methods to thoroughly investigate the text of tradition by examining the details of the text's issues and analyzing them meticulously without any pre-planned deletion or prejudice. I have refrained from issuing any judgment about this tradition until I complete the necessary analysis. In doing this, I followed a method that is at loggerheads with the method most researchers of tradition follow. Because of their lack of such an analysis and the pressure of ideological concerns, they end up praising or disparaging tradition, being enriched by it, or dispensing with it.

My first step in this undertaking was to uncover the linguistic roots of philosophical meanings.¹ My training in different languages played a decisive role in

¹ See Taha Abderrahmane, *Language and Philosophy* (in French), 1977.

helping me discern how the structures of language the philosopher uses have noticeable effects on his intellectual and dogmatic doctrine. I argued for the relativity of philosophical meanings. That is, the philosophies that are transferred to us are limited in their universal dimensions. One has to scrutinise the specific elements explained by the language the philosopher speaks before embracing, defending, and advocating them.

I have called for the necessity of creating Arab-Islamic philosophy whereby the structure of the Arabic language contributes to the building of its scientific and intellectual contents. I recommended that the linguistic structure of Arabic contribute to the construction of these contents.

There is nothing here to trigger criticism of my view. I cannot be criticised for restricting philosophical thought within the linguistic structure, on the one hand, or for excluding the possibility of drawing on different philosophies, on the other hand. For me, the linguistic structure has a real meaning only when we consider its potential to enrich philosophical meaning with a special figurative language that suits the modes of expression in this language. This linguistic structure has no meaning if we neglect its potential to persuade and influence or ignore its ability to inspire us to apply what we have been convinced of. Contents that are disconnected from this structure have no influence or authority. This attitude does not exclude the possibility of quoting or benefiting from the philosophies of others as long as we are aware of the forms of change or transformation that occur in the content of borrowed philosophy when the linguistic structure is applied to it.

The second step in constructing our project was to study the inductive structure of the text of tradition, especially the verbal text, drawing on the latest developments in the field of discourse analysis theory and dialectical argumentation theory (see Abderrahmane 1987). In this stage, I have tried to demonstrate the possibility of building an Arabic scientific discourse model. Drawing on the theories of modern argumentative-rational and discourse analysis, this model employs the informative and representative possibilities of the Arabic language, with some modification in the argumentative-rational and discourse theories that match the representative properties inherent in the Arabic language. I have made continuous efforts to apply my logical and linguistic methods to different aspects of tradition. When these analyses and applications are accomplished, we will be able to work toward establishing the theoretical building blocks that underpin the Islamic methodology concerned with Arabic rhetoric.

1 First: The Linguistic Questions

What are the main differences between the three levels of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics in the linguistic approach? Which of these levels can be considered as the root or origin?

Indeed, these tripartite divisions are transferred from logic to linguistics. In his book *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*, Charles Morris makes a distinction between three elements that determine the concept of signification:²

- Signifier as indication;
- Signifier as meaning;
- Signifier as a site of interpretation from the receiver.

The distinction between these three components can help us distinguish between:

- The level at which we study the formal relationship between signifiers;
- The level at which we investigate the relationship between signifiers and the meanings they carry;
- The level at which we study the relationship between signifiers and their interpreters.

Morris calls the first level “syntax,” the second level “semantics,” and the third level “pragmatics”.

The logician Rudolf Carnap applied this tripartite division of signification in the field of language in his book *Introduction to Semantics and the Formalization of Logic*,³ which linguists carefully studied. Pragmatics consists of three sections:

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- 2 Charles William Morris (1901–1979) was an American philosopher in whose philosophical view, language is seen as a system of signs capable of reflecting the character and social behaviour of those who use signs. He stressed the need to study the effects of the use of signs on the social behaviour of individuals. Unlike the semiotics developed by his fellow scholar Charles Sanders Peirce, Morris approached semiotics in terms of its triadic relationship, consisting particularly of the disciplines of: (a) syntactics (which is concerned with how signs may be combined to form compound signs), (b) semantics (the investigation of the signification of signs), and (c) pragmatics (the study of the roots, uses, and influences of signs). His writings include *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938), *Signs, Language and Behaviour* (1946), *The Open Self* (1948), *Signification and Significance* (1963), and *Writings on the General Theory of Signs* (1971).
- 3 Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970) was a German-born philosopher and naturalised U.S. citizen. He was an influential figure of logical positivism. His major philosophical contributions consist of his philosophy of language, the theory of probability, inductive logic, and modal logic. He dismissed metaphysics as a science which cannot be verified by empirical experience and

1. Deixis deals with demonstrative pronouns and other pronouns whose meanings change according to the circumstances of their use or the context of their enunciation.
2. Presupposition refers to the set of knowledge shared by the speaker and receiver and the ability of the receiver to draw meaning from the context.
3. Speech acts refer to studying the purpose of speech such as proving, requesting, commanding, warning, promising, threatening, and forbidding.

Pragmatics is thus a theory of use in that it studies language as it is used by its speakers. It is also a conversational theory because it examines the conditions of the act of enunciation and communication that speakers aim at in their specific use of language.

Concerning the question as to which of these linguistic levels is the foundational level (if by foundation we mean the logical principle), the foundational level is the syntactical level. If by foundation we mean the actual facts, the foundation is the pragmatic level. In any event, this tripartite division is logical and extensive. Semantics is larger in scope than syntax, as it contains the signified. Pragmatics is larger than semantics, as it contains the component of the speaker. There exists between these levels a relationship of merging and absorption or stronger inclusion to use the aggregate mathematical expression.

If the foundation is the pragmatic level, can we consider pragmatics as an adequate and useful method of research in all intellectual fields in which the natural language contributes to the building of knowledge and truth such as in the fields of philosophy, logic, and literature ... and so on? Where can we see the originality of the results this pragmatic approach yields?

experimentation. His book *Introduction to Semantics and the Formalization of Logic* (Harvard University Press, 1959) consists of two volumes. The first volume *Introduction to Semantics* contains a detailed study of the evolution of the science of semantics and its major concepts such as truth and designation. It also traces the main differences between the syntactical and semantical types of logical consequence and logical truth. At the end, it sheds light on the theory of the interpretation of calculi developed as a deductive system. In the second volume, *The Formalization of Logic*, Carnap explained the method of applying the formalisation of logic and how his theory of language and logic can be represented by a formal system or calculus.

I think that the pragmatic approach is suitable for research in the fields of knowledge conveyed by natural language—the literary field is one of these. The theory of discourse analysis is a part of linguistics. The field of argumentation benefits greatly from pragmatic analysis, especially the theory of speech acts. The field of philosophy has much to do with pragmatics in that the founders of linguistic pragmatics are essentially philosophers, for example, Austin, who came up with the theory of direct speech acts (the meaning of what is said), is an English philosopher interested in natural language. Grice, who came up with indirect speech acts (the meaning of concepts) is also a philosopher. Likewise, Searle, the coordinator of this theory within an integrated system is also a philosopher.

Linguists have enthusiastically embraced this philosophical and pragmatic thought, organising its laws, categorising its issues, and extending its applicability. Moroccan linguists have started to show some interest in it. At the head of these linguists, is the scholar Ahmed al-Mutawakil who specialised in syntactical pragmatics; he was also interested in setting stronger conditions for Arabic grammar. I have benefited from the pragmatics aspect in studying philosophy and speech and have contributed to formulating pragmatic rules for this intellectual discourse. I have produced results that are accurate and specific to a degree that the historical method that has dominated the study of the Arab-Islamic tradition cannot achieve. What I have proven in verbal logic and the rules of reasoning attests to this accuracy and efficiency in approaching tradition.⁴ In the future, I will deal with the reality of philosophy in the Arab-Islamic world; I will evaluate Moroccan production; I will deal with the responsibility of philosophy as I conceive it, establishing the fundamentals of an alternative philosophy and the requirements of philosophy that are geared toward pragmatics.

The originality of the results achieved by the pragmatic approach is manifested in the two aspects of form and content.

1. **Form:** The results were yielded in an exact and systemic way. Models of discourse are built on an integrated approach and abide by the conditions of two competencies: the worst (descriptive competency) and the strongest (interpretive competency). That is to say that, the judgments and claims that are rhetorical and foundational in the context of pragmatics move away from the depiction of isolation, deconstruction, and arbitrariness that they experienced before to the depiction of organisation, reasoning, and coordination.

4 For the terms “verbal logic” and “the law of reasonings”, see Abderrahmane 1987, 140 and 164–168, respectively.

2. Content: These results are characterised by three aspects:
 - a. Achievement: The pragmatic model contributed to the exploration of new facts in the field of rhetoric and argumentation.
 - b. Assessment: These models enable us to look anew at the previous foundational and rhetorical research by reexamining their issues, which merit integration and formulation, as well as reviewing other issues that entail stricter description and construction.
 - c. Expansion: The benefits of these results go beyond the traditional framework of rhetoric and argumentation to a larger space of natural discourse. The rhetorical and argumentative methods drawn from the pragmatic model are not only useful in describing the methods of verbal aesthetics and the rhetoric of influencing at a certain level of discourse, but they are also useful in describing different styles of reporting and the various modes of persuasion and conviction at every level of discourse.

There are two standpoints regarding the relationship between Arabic grammar and linguistics. One standpoint believes that linguistics has gone beyond Arabic grammar. Therefore, the latter can be discarded. The other opposing standpoint sees grammar as sufficient; thus, it rejects the need for linguistics. What is your opinion about these standpoints?

The emergence of modern linguistics and the development of its grammatical methods would presumably lead to new opinions about Arabic grammar; predictably, this would require an assessment of the rhetorical and practical results from any standpoint taken toward this grammar.

Indeed, the novelty and diversity of modern linguistics have drawn the attention of Arab researchers to linguistics. Moreover, linguists were at the head of these researchers. It was normal for some of them to evaluate aspects of Arabic grammar using these recent methods and to assess their technical procedures according to linguistics.

However, the project of evaluating Arabic grammar in light of modern linguistics depends on some prerequisite requirements, otherwise, this project will be devoid of any scientific advantages. Some of these requirements are:

1. The researcher of linguistics should have sufficient knowledge of the models of linguistic theory, both at the level of construction and classification.
2. He should have sufficient knowledge of the rhetorical bases, both the logical and mathematical, on which these methods were built. This requires serious theoretical training.

3. He should not be content with mechanical imitation of the existing linguistic models. He should be able to create his own models that meet the theoretical requirements and that correspond with the models borrowed from the West.
4. He should be trained in Arabic grammar and its exact analytical and descriptive methods. He should be fully conscious of its historical circumstances and rhetorical conditions.

If the researcher of linguistics does not meet these four requirements: being fully aware of the methods of modern linguistics; the methods of Arabic grammar; sufficient theoretical knowledge; and the ability to create these models; his judgments and opinions will not be reliable both in relation to what he reports about western linguists or what he proves about Arab linguists.

When we abide by these criteria in assessing standpoints taken vis-à-vis the linguistic tradition, we will find that the holders of these opinions have not yet been able to meet these requirements, entirely or partially.

That said, the claim that Arabic grammar has exhausted all its innovative capabilities and needs to be replaced with modern linguistics is not justified. Moreover, the supporters of this claim disregard an important fact: The theoretical and methodological ability ancient Arab grammarians possessed is superior to the ability of modern Arab linguists despite the remarkable time gap between us and them and despite the evolution of various methods and techniques in linguistics during this long period of time.

The opposing claim suggests that Arabic grammar should be retained while the methods of modern linguistics should be discarded. In this regard, there are two views. The intention of the first view is plausible and undebatable. It stresses the need to avoid applying the methods of Western linguistics; it also discourages the blind application of these borrowed methods to Arabic grammar to come up with definite and general judgments on the grammatical and linguistic tradition. The second view suggests the necessity of reconsidering what the ancient grammarians thought and disregarding scholarship in modern linguistics and all attempts to know its methods. This approach is difficult to accept, bearing in mind its negative effects on Arabic grammar. Among these effects we can mention:

1. Arabic grammar cannot be supported by denying modern linguistics. This denial can only exacerbate the underestimation of Arabic grammar, implying that the value and existence of this grammar are based on such denial.
2. The complete disregard for the methods of modern linguistics may hinder the Arab researcher from acquiring theoretical and methodological training that could empower him to renew scholarly interest in Arabic gram-

mar. Such a renewal can be accomplished by expounding the various aspects of the descriptive, educational, and causative efficiency of this grammar. This cannot be accomplished without theoretical training.

3. Being unaware of the possibilities and limits of linguistics makes the grammatical tradition-oriented researcher unable to respond to the pre-judgment and prejudice of the opponents of Arabic grammar. He would be also unable to gain the trust of researchers in what he says, bearing in mind that the linguistic opponents are distinguished by what is new, which is more tempting than what is old, as represented by Arabic grammar.

What is the modern scientific value of the Arab-Islamic tradition, both at the level of rhetoric and Islamic legal theory (the fundamentals of religion and jurisprudence), from a pragmatic perspective? How should one deal with it judiciously?

Scholars who do research on the Arab-Islamic rhetorical and jurisprudential tradition follow the pragmatic method. Here I do not need to go into detail about the methods of al-Sakkākī and al-Jurjānī, as well as others who tackled the causes of events and requirements of circumstances and contexts in the rhetorical approach.⁵ It is also needless to discuss the position of relationships between the speaker and the addressee in the fundamentals of jurisprudence and religion. In these relationships, I look at the speaker and addressee through the methods of “claiming” and “opposing”. In my book *On the Fundamentals of Dialogue and Renovation of Islamic Theology*, I laboured to derive pragmatic

5 ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (1009–1078 or 1081) was a well-known Persian grammarian of the Arabic language, a literary theorist of the Muslim Shāfi‘ī school, and a follower of al-Ash‘arī. His central contributions include *Dalā’il al-‘ijāz* (*The Proofs of the Inimitability* (of the Qur‘ān) and *Asrār al-balāgha* (*The Secrets of Eloquence*). He maintained that the relationship between a word as a “sound-image” and the meaning it signifies is arbitrary. He was adamant about proving that God’s word in the Qur‘ān cannot be imitated. He developed an early argument regarding the impossibility of performing exact translations. Sirāj al-Dīn Abū Ya‘qūb Yūsuf al-Sakkākī (1160–1228 or 1229) was a Persian Muslim scholar famous for his contribution to the study of language, rhetoric, magic, and talismans. He wrote many books which contributed to the development of Arabic grammar, semantics, rhetoric (*balāgha*) and stylistics (*‘ilm al-asālib*). He based most of his examples on the Qur‘ān. Among his foundational and surviving books are *Kitāb al-shāmil wa-baḥr al-kāmil* (*The Encompassing Book and Ocean of Perfection*), *Miftāḥ al-‘ulūm* (*The Key to Knowledge*, on rhetoric) *Kitāb al-Jumal* (*The Book of Sentences*, commentary on a pre-existing work by a similar name), *al-Tibyān* (*The Clarification*), *al-Tilasm* (*The Talisman*, in Persian); *Risāla fi ‘ilm al-munāzara* (*A Treatise on Debating*).

laws for this method. I believe the following are the best practices for researchers dealing with this rhetorical and jurisprudential tradition:

1. Shunning the loose, readymade prejudgements that some permissive researchers would spread among their targeted audience; they used them also to justify all their subjective attitudes towards tradition, whether for the sake of adopting or denouncing it.
2. Abandoning the division of rhetorical and jurisprudential tradition into distinct areas and sections; for instance, an acceptable section that is worth studying, another one that is not worth exploring, or another dead section from which we disconnect our present life ... and so on. I believe that this sectional theory of tradition is devoid of any scientific value despite its popularity among readers and its acceptance by both opponents and proponents of tradition. For my part, I think that the real intention of this theory is to accelerate awareness of the need for practice and the tendency to assume ideological attitudes vis-à-vis tradition. Even if we believe in the existence of obstacles and gaps in some sections, this should not prevent the researcher from working on them, using all possible means to demonstrate their aspects.
3. Acquiring a complete knowledge of ancient scholars' methods and sufficient training in the methods of the modern pragmaticians. Otherwise, researchers may fall into supporting or opposing judgements without reasonable support.
4. Applying the most useful and beneficial modern means in every section of this tradition, whether estimating its value has recurred or not. Since the problematics of the jurisprudential and rhetorical tradition are related to discourse, the methods of pragmatics are the most suitable methods; by contrast, when the researcher engages other methods intended originally for other subjects that are not discourse-related he loses all the benefits of this tradition.

The employment of this jurisprudential and rhetorical tradition can be realised in two different ways that depend on these two distinct conditions:

Firstly, we need to draw on rules and assumptions derived from this tradition to enrich our new pragmatic device. This is horizontally developed and requires that we define precisely the procedural forms of the means taken from tradition; this can take the shape of defining exact rules that we will use to control the working of these means inside the new device.

Secondly, we need to create—through the extracts and rules taken from tradition—a pragmatic model that assimilates the most recent pragmatic means and submit them to a theoretical pattern that suits the academic and linguistic requirements of tradition. That is, this model would represent a ver-

tical development of these means. This method requires that the created model meet all the given requirements in the scientific theoretical research at the level of sufficiency, coordination, harmony, simplicity and adequacy ... and so on. For me, this is the highest and furthest stage in the employment of jurisprudential and rhetorical tradition. The first chapter “*Marātib al-ḥiwāriyya*” (*The Classes of Dialogism*) in the book of *The Fundamentals of Dialogue and Renovation of Islamic Theology* discusses this topic.

Is it possible to build politically and socially informed attitudes based on the belief in the efficiency of the pragmatic approach?

To answer this question, we must address the nature of pragmatics; if this kind of research is part of linguistics, it is subject to all the judgments that are made in linguistics. They share the same relationships with political and social positions. Once we take for granted the empirical scientificity of linguistics, it will probably share with physics the same relationships with these positions. No one can deny that these positions would interfere in science only in relation to its goals, rather than its laws and equations regulating its subject.

Indeed, pragmatics is a part of linguistics and has some elements of a social nature, especially in the sections that deal with “common knowledge”, “context”, and “obligations and rights of the speaker and the addressee”. However, the way it deals with these issues remains independent of practical situations; even if it is possible to construct social and political attitudes on the basis of pragmatics, this sort of action is considered external to the nature of how pragmatics functions.

Yes, scientific results in any field can be used to reach practical goals; yet, these results cannot themselves be responsible for such engagement and commitment.

2 Second: The Logical Questions

Formal language is also referred to as natural language. Could you demonstrate the characteristics of this formal language and its relationship with natural language?

Formal language is any scientific language that consists of three elements: the alphabet, grammar, and rules of inference. The alphabet consists of a set of written codes, some of them are static and others are variable. Grammar selects from the constructions allowed by the codes of the alphabet a set of gram-

matically acceptable constructions. As for the rules of inference, we can talk about the popular “replacement rule” and “placement rule”. They start from a finite group of acceptable constructions which are turned into axioms—that is, issues that are acceptable and worthy of consideration. The remaining acceptable constructions are derived from this finite group. The best example of this formal language is the language of the predicate logic that is used to formulate mathematics and many scientific theories.

On this basis, the making of formal language goes through two distinct stages. The stage of construction defines grammatical expressions, and the stage of coordination defines logical expressions. This latter stage was misunderstood by some researchers who started using the term “axiomatics” in the wrong contexts. Indeed, this term has a precise meaning that is easy to transfer. We have already elucidated that meaning, which is making inferences from a given statement; however, its transfer to Arabic is expressed by “inferential coordination” or “postulated coordination”.

Formal language is not only concerned with inference and construction (syntax). It can have theoretical models whose terminologies can include some given interpretations (such as the theory of numbers). There may evolve a kind of association between the language and the model. Thus, any inferred construction may be a correct matter in the model (this is what is known as the question of trueness). Each correct issue in the model may be a construction inferred from the language (this is what is called the question of completeness).

Therefore, the differences between formal language and natural language become clear and can be summed up by saying that formal language is a descriptive (*wāṣifa*) language in which there exist varying levels, whereas natural language is a language that is described (*mawṣūfa*) and within which the levels interconnect; it can be practised only through these interconnections.

Since formal language is descriptive, it can be used in describing the natural language itself. Generative grammar is, for instance, a formal language that is supposed to describe the formation level in natural language. Generative semantics is a formal language that is supposed to describe the interpretation level in this natural language. Conceptual pragmatics is a formal language that is supposed to describe the negotiation level in natural language. We have illustrated this in our book *Formal Logic and Grammar* (1983).

It is thought that the usefulness of logic is not only limited to formulating mathematics and exact sciences but can also be used in raising issues in empirical sciences. What is your opinion about using the means of logic in the field of tradition, and what are their benefits?

At the beginning of this dialogue, I referred to the idea that the Islamic intellectual tradition, including philosophy, theology, jurisprudence, and language, has greatly benefited from the logical and argumentative knowledge existing at the time. In my opinion, it is not possible to understand this tradition without grasping the means of logic and debating (argumentation). Positing that this opinion is valid, it becomes reasonable to say that using the modern means of logic in describing and analysing tradition will be relevant and suitable to the nature of tradition. I believe that these means are replete with inferential (deductive) methods; while some of the means tend to feign drawing on reason, most of them are steeped in argumentation.

The use of these means of logic has many benefits for the Arab researcher who can learn how to abstain from making prejudgment in his research. He can learn how to inquire and investigate the issues of tradition in addition to receiving general theoretical training.

I have given an example of this use of logic in the section dealing with *al-qiyās wa al-mumāthala* (juristic reasoning by analogy) in my book *On the Fundamentals of Dialogue and Renovation of Islamic Theology*. This analogy commonly had one meaning among historians of Islamic philosophy. However, by means of logic, I have demonstrated that there are four meanings of analogy, each constituting an independent and complete system characterised by distinct and unique laws.

With the development of mathematical logic, there appears a renewed interest in the logic of directed action; this was supported by the advent of the “possible worlds theory”. What is this theory? What is its relationship with the model of logic?

It is clear that the model of logic is concerned with studying the characteristics of the cases of obligation, possibility, and permissions such as saying “a triangle must be a geometrical shape consisting of three intersecting sides” or “al-Ghazālī can be a doctor.” Some of the laws of this logic are: “necessity presupposes existence,” “existence presupposes possibility,” “necessity presupposes the needs for necessity,” “possibility presupposes the needs of possibility” ... and so on.

Logicians did not content themselves with studying the reasoning and formation levels in the model of logic. They were also interested in the semantic level and tried to build models for interpreting these reasoned laws. Some of them, such as Saul Kripke, came up with the concept of “possible worlds” in the 1960s. He claimed that he had borrowed this from Leibniz. Through this concept, he interpreted obligation and possibility as follows:

- We can talk about an obligatory case when it is true in all possible factors.
 - We can talk about a possible case when it is only true in one possible factor.
- Since possible factors are interconnected, obligation and possibility can be interpreted broadly as follows:
- A case is obligatory in the real world when it is true in all possible worlds in the real world.
 - A case is possible in the real world when it is true in one of the possible worlds that can be reached through the real world.

Once logicians built these semantic models, they were able to enrich philosophical contemplation and look anew at the classical issues of philosophy. The existential stance of the possible worlds and the existence of selves in various possible worlds remains one of the significant problematics raised by modern philosophy. One of the oldest problematics that has been reconsidered is the issue of subjective attributes and contingent attributes and the concept of analogy and similarity.

The Arab philosopher is still unaware of this innovation that has taken place in the field of philosophy owing to the possible worlds theory; this is because he is not familiar with the means of modern logic and what has been recently published in foreign languages, and he has no excuse for that.

3 Third: The Philosophical Questions

In your books, there seems to be a clear commitment to the philosophy of phenomenology and a direct rejection of Descartes's rationalism and materialist tendencies. How do you read the failure of this philosophy in the modern era in the West? Can this philosophy introduce a theory on the historicism of knowledge? Why has not this philosophy become popular in the Arab world in spite of Hasan Hanafi's efforts?⁶

6 Hasan Hanafi (1935–2021) was an Egyptian theologian and philosopher and a leading scholar in contemporary Arab philosophical and theological studies. He was particularly interested in the renewal of Islamic discursive texts and the reconstruction of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). In his opinion, religious texts should not only be perceived as a source of Islamic law but should also be seen as a phenomenological experience of religiosity. His new conception of renewal consists of drawing on three typologies, namely, historical consciousness, eidetic consciousness, and praxis consciousness. Hashas stated that "Hanafi's major project was to build a new science of theology in the Islamic tradition based on turning the concept of God into an anthropological idea. Theology has to turn into anthropology to be able to address humanity and its needs." Hashas Mohamed, "Farewell to Hassan Hanafi, the Intel-

To my knowledge, phenomenology is an thoroughly descriptive method that relies on examining a phenomenon in its relationship with the human consciousness as a way to understand its nature. It depends on two essential principles: “intentionality” and “suspension”. However, my inquiry is a kind of theoretical attempt that draws on the results researchers have obtained in the field of logic, linguistics, philosophy of logic, and philosophy of language. It has nothing to do with the philosophy of phenomenology that is closer to contemplation and utopian research than to logic and science. Thus, I think that this question is not relevant to my area of interest because it is “invalid to consider”, to use an expression from jurisprudence. This is because the opponent, to use the language of argumentation, misinterprets my logical and linguistic orientation in the light of phenomenology.

Indeed, modern Arab philosophical writings have not yet become familiar with the likes of this logical linguistic research. This can be attributed to the following factors:

1. Modern Arab philosophical writings content themselves with historical, social, and political methods. They are unaware of the fact that these methods constitute only one possible choice among multiple methods and that they are not better than others, as far as the logical conditions are concerned.
2. These writings, especially in the region of the Arab Maghreb, focus on books and subjects written in French. It is evident that French philosophical writing is characterised by the spirit of historicism and remains entrenched in literary contemplation. Being so reliant on French texts and disregarding what is written in other languages such as English and German had a great effect on the orientation of Arab research in general and Moroccan research in particular. This kind of research tends to move toward a literary tradition that is full of generalities that lack serious scrutiny.
3. The students of Arab philosophy are not yet acquainted with research in logic and linguistics. The main explanation for that is that modern Arab philosophers are not yet convinced of the importance of having sufficient training in logic.

Concerning my rejection of Descartes’s rationalism, we should remember that the blind adoption of this rationalism in the Arab world dates back to the time when Taha Hussein fell prey to the temptation of French culture. Some modern Arab researchers are still attached to this rationalism despite the critiques

lectual Father of the Islamic Left and Occidentalism,” January 2022, *Reset Dialogues*. www.resetdoc.org/story/farewell-hassan-hanafi-father-islamic-left-occidentalism/

it has received in its homeland. These researchers did not take into account such critical reviews of rationalism in their evaluation of the Islamic tradition. Instead, they chose to stick to the version of rationalism that its pioneers surpassed; thus, we claim the following:

Statement one: the objective circumstances of Descartes's rationalism came to an end. Subsequently, the claim of the eternal validity of rationalism and its suitability in reforming the Islamic tradition came to an end as well.

Statement two: Descartes's rationalism was presented by Descartes himself in a discourse that is mostly subject to the criteria of argumentation and linguistic demonstration. Therefore, he should have prioritised argumentation and demonstration over the reasoning that his rationalism is committed to.

As for the materialist tendencies, it appears that my method, which is built on pragmatics, logic, and argumentative theory, constitutes choices that are incongruent with these tendencies. I have already justified this choice and it is needless to address it again; nevertheless, I will refer to two important methodological issues:

Firstly, some of the issues that the materialist tendencies claim to examine can be dealt with through pragmatics and argumentation, using accurate and efficient means such as the concepts of "verb", "action", and others.

Secondly, the method of argumentative pragmatics aims to control the relationship between the text and the world it portrays and creates, whereas the methods of historicism, materialism, or socialism overlooked this idea. They free themselves from the methodological restrictions that are needed in the transition from the text to its described reality. Indeed, there are no theoretical benefits from the results reached through these methods if the conditions of transition are not compiled and arranged. However, it is still possible to talk about some practical benefits if these methods are attached to some conscientious volition and are subjected to ideological orientation and responsible usage.

How can we refute the claim of some sceptics regarding the nature of your critiques of professors al-Jabri and Mohamed Arkoun? These sceptics claim that this critique is subjective. In other words, why al-Jabri and Arkoun, specifically?

My critiques of professors Mohamed Abed al-Jabri and Mohamed Arkoun are purely logical and their justification is purely methodological. Let us start with these justifications. As you know, the topic of my book *On the Fundamentals of Dialogue* is "the methodology of reasoning" in the Islamic tradition, and this methodology is related to two main questions: logical and linguistic questions.

The logical question: both professors tackled this question in their discussion of Islamic reason. They described the rationalism of reasoning/debating (the method of theology and jurisprudence) in a contrasting way. Al-Jabri thought that this method is limited in its rationalism (a demonstrative reason that should be surpassed) while Arkoun considered that this method exaggerated its rationalism (an Aristotelian argumentative reason that must be denounced).

The linguistic question: Both scholars dealt with this question. Arkoun claimed to use the results of modern linguistics in theorising “the Islamic methodology” while al-Jabri claimed to generalise the findings of Arabic linguistics on the totality of Islamic production except for Averroistic philosophical thought.

Since my research focused on using a linguistic logical method and applying it to “reasoning/debating” which is itself a logical linguistic subject, it was necessary to deal with the previous opposing positions and I had to review their judgments. In fact, dealing with one position would lead naturally and logically to dealing with the other. It was also necessary to deal only with a part of their thoughts until methodological necessity requires that I deal with other aspects of their thought such as the tripartite division of “demonstration, rhetoric, gnostics” in the thought of al-Jabri and the concept of Qur’ānic reading in Arkoun’s work. I may even be obliged in the future to deal with the thought of other scholars both from the Maghreb and the Middle East.

The purely logical nature of my critique of al-Jabri and Arkoun did not deal only with their starting postulates—which can be tolerated and deemed as one of the possible methodological decisions, but it targeted essentially the method they followed to deduce conclusions from those postulates. I showed through a strictly demonstrative reason the logical faultiness of these researchers’ methods. I claimed that the way they approached “Islamic methodology” should apply to their method as well. Al-Jabri practised rhetoric when he should have dealt with demonstrative reason, and Arkoun exercised rationalisation, but he called for a way that did not lead to rationalisation. If unintentional, the faultiness of their method can be seen as emanating from paradoxes; if intentional, this faultiness would stem from paralogism and sophism. There is no tangible way to leave out this faultiness. Anyone who denies this faultiness and seeks justification outside logic is obstinate, arrogant, and not worthy of having a conversation with.

You criticised the proponents of rational demonstration among the philosophers of Islam, and you valorised theology and jurisprudence, that is dialectical theology. Does this critique have any relationship with the

school of Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Rāziq whose followers ended up invalidating the originality of the philosophy of Aristotelianism in Islam?⁷

Indeed, with strong evidence I have risen against Aristotelianism in its Arab, rather than its Greek, context. I believed the Arabian embrace of this thought did not meet the linguistic and logical conditions that the act of borrowing from others requires.

For some examples of how the linguistic conditions were breached, we can mention how some expressions of the philosophers of Islam did not abide by the discursive requirement of Arabic rhetoric. Thus, their writings were marked by conceptual awkwardness and their influence on major Islamic thought was very limited as opposed to what some later historians of philosophy claimed; they were not, along with other theologians, scholars, and Sufis, subject to suppression and restriction. We have no stories or testimonies about their being whipped, crucified, or burned. The reason for their lack of influence was subjective and inherently related to the ways they linguistically constructed their thought, which prevented them from having good communication with Arabic language speakers.

To illustrate how the logical conditions were breached, we can say that the philosophers of Islam produced philosophical representation which did not abide by the requirements of logical demonstration, as opposed to what they themselves claimed or what today some of their proponent historians of philosophy assert. Their evidence is not less argumentative or more demonstrative than the evidence presented by other theologians and Islamic jurists. They all followed argumentative and demonstrative methods, such as representative

7 Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Rāziq (1885–1947) was an Egyptian Islamic philosopher. Hashas and al-Khatib (2020, 9) mentioned that “he was a Sheikh, trained at al-Azhar, who subsequently obtained his doctorate at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he studied under scholars such as Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), and then taught Islamic jurisprudence in Lyon. He became Rector of al-Azhar and was appointed Minister of Religious Affairs and Endowments eight times, the first Azhari to hold such a position. He was a student of the famous reformist scholar Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905). Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Rāziq started teaching what came to be known in the curriculum as “Islamic philosophy,” along with Emile Bréhier (1876–1952) and André Laland (1867–1963), at the Faculty of Arts of the Egyptian University (later named King Farouk University and now Cairo University), where Taha Hussein (1889–1973) was the only other Egyptian professor. Before that, “Islamic philosophy” as a subject was part of a philosophy or general philosophy course and was taught from a “foreign” perspective and often without underscoring its original aspects, by European scholars of the Islamic Orient who were teaching philosophy at the university, such as the Italians Davide Santillana (1855–1931), Carlo Alfonso Nallino (1872–1938), the English scholar Thomas Walker Arnold (1864–1930), the French scholar Louis Massignon (1883–1962).”

analogy, similes, and comparisons. Perhaps they were less successful in practice for they deviated from the habits of the Arabs in speaking and insisted on following the linguistic habits of the Greeks that are considered to be demonstrative.

My critical views regarding the philosophers of Islam were met with the criticism that philosophers are known for their use of and acquaintance with logic and that they are wont to follow its method to prove their points. Against this counter-criticism, I advance the following arguments:

1. Those philosophers have a knowledge of logic that is not better than their predecessors. Moreover, some Islamic jurists and theologians were much better than these philosophers at recognising the nature of logic, its dimensions, and its horizons. The proof of that is their call for the independence of logic, which was not clearly demanded by the philosophers. They also employed logic in other fields that are not philosophy-related, which philosophers did not do.
2. The difference between the philosophical claim and the logical subject was not clear for the philosophers in that they conflate the conditions of each, whereas Islamic jurists and theologians tended to clearly and methodologically distinguish between them. They also succeeded in extracting logic from its Greek metaphysical context.

These linguistic and logical conditions are our criteria for reforming both Aristotelian thought among the philosophers of Islam and the theological and jurisprudential thought. Applying these criteria to tradition aims to prove the following two statements:

1. The theological and jurisprudential tradition did not only employ all the declarative means of the Arabic language, but it also applied these means to the borrowed tradition; it dealt with the borrowed content the way it did with the original content; it altered and guided this borrowed content according to the selected values. These alterations and guidance were not attributed to a lack of awareness or betrayal of the borrowed items. Rather, they were based on an awareness, which is stronger than the consciousness of the philosophers, of the need to engage in a process of indigenising the borrowed, both at the level of form and meaning, until it becomes productive in the Islamic discursive field. Hence, the borrowed content no longer seemed isolated and disconnected as is the case with the philosophers who were utterly unconscious of this need to indigenise borrowed content.
2. The theological and jurisprudential tradition provides perfectly logical conditions that are suitable to its claims and subjects. The theologians and jurists did not claim to practise rational demonstration the way it was

practised by the logicians, mathematicians, or engineers. For they were more aware than the philosophers of the nature of rational argumentation in natural speeches. They focused their efforts on building a unified argumentative theory. This theory is included in the “research on reasoning and debating (*munāẓara*)”, and they excel in this field.

I can say that the reasons that made me relinquish Islamic Aristotelian philosophy (*mashshā’iyya*) and reconsider Islamic theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh and uṣūl al-fiqh*) are basically discursive linguistic as well as logical demonstrative reasons, whereas the reasons behind Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Rāziq’s abandonment of Islamic Aristotelian philosophy are related to the contents of these three cognitive areas. If I agree with this school in some areas of Islamic thought, it by no means suggests that I am under their influence. My call to renounce Aristotelian philosophy is mainly concerned with the way it was transferred to the Arabic Islamic discursive field; its Greek content, however, is not part of my concern. It may be right or wrong in that context; yet, it remains at least linguistically suitable in that context. As for the followers of Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Rāziq’s school, they tried to invalidate this philosophy as content rather than as an Arabic formula, as I did. This is the major difference between us.

What is your opinion about the critical tradition vis-à-vis religions and sacred books in Western and Arab thought? What is your standpoint about the critique of Sufism particularly in the Arab tradition and modern Salafist/fundamentalist thinking?

I can answer your question concerning the critical tradition with three images:

1. The initial logical image: The critical tradition regarding religious belief does not have strong rational evidence, better and concrete proofs, or better and more practical rules than religious belief itself. Those who criticise religion are like those who believe in it in that they can receive all objections or face them with denial and evidence.
2. The historical image: No one can deny that the critical tradition regarding religious belief has created civilisational and cultural history more than the commitment to religious belief has done—at least till now. We should not believe in the objection stating that piety or religiosity was the main cause for what is called today “religious extremism” (*al-taṭarruf al-dīnī*) or what was called in the past “religious bigotry” (*al-ta’aṣṣub al-dīnī*) for the following two reasons:
 - Firstly, not all believers necessarily succumb to bigotry. The principle of “you have your own religion and I have mine” is quite applicable, and

many who are attached to religion have taken this principle to heart, both defending and advocating it (Q 109:6).

- Secondly, not all unbelievers are necessarily free from bigotry. The critics are like the believers in that they may both succumb to extremism. These critics construct practical positions upon their thought and beliefs, which may harm others and their right to differ.
3. The actual practical image: We cannot deny the statement that criticising religion has today become outdated. The proof of this is the growing awareness of the strategic importance of religion in our life, which has become deeper and stronger than in the past.

Today, there is an upsurge of interest in religious philosophies and a decline in the philosophies that criticise religion as was the case in the previous century and the turn of this century. I expect that this interest in religious inquiry will be invigorated and renew itself at the turn of the next century, which will result in the emergence of philosophies regarding faith and belief.

As for your question about Sufism and its relationship with the critiques from “non-Sufis” (materialists, historicists, and positivists), I do not think we have enough time in this dialogue that is about to end. I will write on this topic very soon. It will suffice to mention that the critiques that were directed against Sufism are applicable to the controversial issue of “taking a loan” and “not taking a loan”. All these critiques are liable to embody the following attributes:

- a. Accusation of heresy (*tabdīʿ*): In accordance with “the principle of transformation” (*tahawwul*), which suggests that any doctrinal movement is liable to (owing to interference of the factors of historical evolution, ecological difference, and individual training) changes and alterations that remove it from its roots and sources.
- b. Freezing (*tajmīd*): In accordance with the “principle of alternation” (*dawr*), this second principle suggests that any doctrinal movement has a certain life that spans two stages that are either convergent or divergent. One works on innovation and independent reasoning (*ijtihād*) while the other is distinguished by stagnation and imitation.
- c. Supporting the enemy (*muwālāt al-ʿaduw*): In accordance with what we call “the principle of overcoming” (*taghallub*), this third principle suggests that any doctrinal movement has the right to overcome its enemies in a confrontation by belittling their values and status.

Translations

Is it not time to stop practising blind and dumb translation?



Translation constitutes a deep question in Arab-Islamic philosophy; what is the added value of this translation? And how can we deal with it?

As you said, translation is undoubtedly a deep question in Arabic philosophy; in fact, it is a fateful question for this philosophy. I would even say that translation is a matter of life or death for Arabic philosophy; however, this does not mean that philosophy always lives in the presence of translation and dies in its absence. Philosophy can, however, die in the presence of translation. I think this is the case of Arabic philosophy. In spite of the presence of translation, philosophy remains almost dead. The life and death of philosophy are measured, respectively, by the presence and absence of innovation. Arab philosophy does not involve any innovation; the reason for its death is the way translation is practised.

The translation method is dumb and unspeaking, and there is no innovation in the absence of speaking. Its method is also blind and unseeing, and there is no innovation without vision. Its dumbness emanates from its willingness to allow another language to speak in the Arabic language; unfortunately, it has not spoken either language. Its blindness emanates from its willingness to ponder a foreign research area within an Arabic knowledge area; unfortunately, it has not pondered either area. An example of this dumb and blind philosophy is the translation of Giles Deleuze's book *What is Philosophy?*

Philosophy has no life without a seeing and speaking translation, which cannot be considered a speaking entity without the mediation of Arabic style in the process of translating original words and conveying their contents, even if that requires acting freely, when necessary, in these words and contents. When the translation is not made with a careful selection of words and well-defined contents, it becomes more harmful than beneficial or useful. It hampers the receiver's ability to comprehend, which thereby increases his ignorance. Acting freely in the text becomes more important than the translation of dumb

words because it can preserve the fluency of words and clarity of contents. With fluency and clarity, language obtains its spontaneity, which is the secret of its survival and productivity.

Translation cannot acquire this ability to see if it does not draw on the Arabic discursive field in order to facilitate and authenticate translated concepts and facts, even if that requires couching them in the original meanings and values. The process of translation becomes more harmful than useful when it is carried out only through the use of foreign concepts and conflicting facts, as it hampers the receiver's strength of will. Therefore, this discursive couching becomes more important than blind cognitive translation because it is more protective of the familiarity of concepts and contingency of facts. With familiarity and contingency, the mind is empowered to face change, which is the secret of its productivity and innovation.

It is crystal clear that this speaking-seeing method in translating the philosophical text will require its respective proponent to be an innovator as much as a translator. This kind of translation can only be carried out by those steeped in philosophising to the extent that their proficiency in translating comes to match their proficiency in philosophising.

Only novice philosophers or outsiders advocate blind and dumb philosophical translations for which there is unlimited evidence. There is for instance explicit historical evidence. This is related to the fact that the earlier Arab translators who translated Greek philosophical texts were not philosophers. They were instead physicians, astronomers, or none of these. It is obvious that what these non-specialist translators produced is full of flaws that are not found in the work of specialists. Moreover, it is common for the philosopher to begin his career by practising translation. Then, when he has somehow become adept at philosophising, he moves on to composition. It is also evident that what initial attempts produce will certainly contain defects that are not found in what specialists produce. Also, many of those who specialised in philosophical translation are unable to create innovative composition in philosophy. It is equally evident that what has resulted from the inability to innovate will be replete with defects that are not found among those who are able to innovate.

In order for philosophical translation to truly speak and see, it should not be undertaken by beginners who are seeking fame nor by those who are unable to compose. Rather, experienced philosophers who have reached the highest levels in philosophising should undertake translation, having attained a certain degree of innovation in philosophical composition. Even if their translations cannot attain the position of living texts, which elicit an immediate response from the receiver to exercise his innovative potential, they can enjoy a degree of livingness that encourages the receiver to exercise gradually this potential.

In the absence of this potential, there will arise no Arab whose intellectual universalism equals its cultural relativity and whose borrowing from others equals its innovation on the part of the self.

You have a new scientific project whose main concerns are identified in your book *Understanding Philosophy, the first part, Philosophy and Translation*. The question here is how did you bring together, in this title, the word jurisprudence, which is organically connected to a dogmatic system, and the word philosophy, which is connected to an intellectual rather than dogmatic system?

I have been perplexed by what I found in Arabic philosophical writings, both ancient and recent. They are dominated by a certain blind imitation that I have not seen in other writings. I have pondered at length the reasons behind this imitation and ways of freeing these writings from it. I have determined to present Arab readers with a way that enables them to philosophise without having to imitate others. The subject matter of the essence or jurisprudence of philosophy is the study of philosophy from outside, at the level of expression, contents, and behaviour, just as a scholar studies a certain cognitive phenomenon. This will help the Arab reader see the various paths the philosopher has followed in formulating his concepts, definitions, and evidence to advance his judgments and claims. The philosopher follows, more or less, these paths in his personal life.

Concerning my use of the word “jurisprudence”, it serves my scientific purpose well as it had enjoyed ordinary use before it attained its well-known Sharia meaning. We are here concerned with this standard usage of the word “jurisprudence” and not its specific religious meaning. In its natural usage, it not only refers to knowledge and science but also refers to both the knowledge of something and the application of this knowledge. Jurisprudence can be attained only through applied science, which is applied to and reflected in the behaviour of those who profess it.

In contrast to the philosophers’ opinion stating that philosophy is merely a way of looking into things—that is, any knowledge that is not applicable—I believe knowledge should be accompanied by implementation when necessary. Otherwise, there is no point in this knowledge. Since I was researching knowledge in accordance with this special consideration, I perceived jurisprudence as the most suitable word to convey my conception of the words “knowledge” and “science” which do not necessarily amount to the intended meaning of implementation (practice or action, *amal*). Thus, I suggested “jurisprudence of philosophy”, and I did not say “the knowledge of philosophy” or “the science

of philosophy". We can also say "the jurisprudence of politics" or "the jurisprudence of journalism" whenever we consider that there is a certain action in political or journalistic statements. For all this, the way in which I used the word "jurisprudence" is quite different from its usage in religious learning (Islamic legal theory), and hence, should not be subject to any opposition. Otherwise, all the common words that exist between this science and other positivist sciences should be ignored, for example, the word judgment (*ḥukm*). There are many examples of this in our language such as "religious (Islamic legal) belief" and "cognitive belief".

Arab thinkers were dazzled by the idea of reproducing others. Can we say that this dazzlement accounts for their indifference to the benefits and consequences of the "jurisprudence of philosophy" project?

My project "The Jurisprudence of philosophy" has attracted the interest of critics both in Morocco and the Arabian East, especially with regard to my theory of translating philosophical texts. I have dealt with three types of translation:

Firstly, there is the ultimate/final translation (*al-tarjama al-taḥṣīliyya*) which aims at verbal literality in that it translates every single word of the text. The words of the translated text may outnumber those of the original text and are probably never fewer.

Secondly, there is the communicative translation (*al-tarjama al-tawṣīliyya*) that aims at content literality in that it translates every single meaning of the text, whether or not there is a correspondence between the words of the source and translated texts. However, dissimilarity is the most probable aspect here.

Thirdly, foundational (epistemic) translation (*al-tarjama al-ta'ṣīliyya*) aims at acting freely in the original text, both at the level of words and meanings, in a way that enables the receiver to acquire the ability to philosophise in the text. The seriousness of this translation theory made me argue for the imperative of reconsidering the traditional concept of philosophy, which describes philosophy in terms of complete abstract demonstrative knowledge. There is a need to replace this kind of concept with other attributes that are suitable for the status of translation which is based on the principle of language diversity and difference.

However, instead of dealing with the fundamentals and general basics I have drawn on to advance my theories on philosophical knowledge and practice, and instead of discussing the horizons that my project of developing philosophical competency among Arab receivers opens, critics were content with the details of my project, which they tore out of their larger rational argumentative context, such as the argumentative foundational translation that I

proposed for translating Descartes's "*cogito*", which was "see(k) to find" (*unzur tajid*) or the expression "be aware," (*i'lam*) with which I have begun some of my paragraphs, in the manner of our forebears. I reckon that this expression has a logical and dialogic meaning of paramount importance. I was about to write a book entitled *I'lam anna "i'lam" (Be Aware to "Be Aware")* in response to those who attribute my work to the logic of "be aware" (*i'lam*); however, my will to complete my project on the jurisprudence of philosophy outweighed this idea. So, I put off writing this book until I could finish my project.

I think that the sectional view (*al-maslak al-tajzīrī*) of critics can be ascribed to one of these three matters. Maybe it is due to haste in writing; I may not be wrong to say that Arab critics read less and write much. They had to spend sufficient time reading until they comprehended the totality of questions and evidence they wanted to criticise in order to avoid doing injustice to themselves and others. It can be also due to the shortage of methodological meticulousness in exercising criticism. It is no exaggeration to say that Arab critics consider only the content of what they read and rush to advance their judgment without working toward elucidating the means and techniques used to establish these contents or evaluating them on the grounds of these technical means. As a consequence, modern Arab intellectual criticism tends toward a certain undesirable simplicity and shallowness, which is a tendency toward destruction. It is no exaggeration to say that Arab critics are more worried about the loss of what they produce than about the loss of science and knowledge.

Once these critics feel that their ideas are faced by threats, such as the disclosure of their shortcomings or reduction and limitation of their circulation, they will right away stand up to those threats, using all available critical weapons, both good and immoral, not caring about whether they are right or wrong in their criticism. All that matters for them is to block any potential competing book and distort its ideas by attributing irrelevant thoughts to it to chase away its likely readers.

Unlike other Arabic projects, the lack of interest in the jurisprudence of philosophy is due to the following three factors:

Firstly, my project is scientific and philosophical; however, Arab readers are used to dealing with projects of political and historical nature. This is too serious to the extent that they cannot think of other existing projects that can promote vigilance within the Arab-Islamic nation through the use of new sources other than the ones their readers are accustomed to.

Secondly, in my projects, I use an accurate logical and linguistic method. The other projects follow a loose and ideological method adorned sometimes with concepts borrowed from scientific or other fields. My method may not be known or used truthfully and accurately in most popular projects. It is quite

obvious that a loose methodology is easier to understand compared with an accurate one. Moreover, things that are easy and undemanding always appeal to readers.

Thirdly, those who are in charge of these politicised projects belong to groups, organisations, or parties that allow them easy access to their media and political privileges. They benefit from their pressure facilities in order to spread their opinions and overshadow counter views. They appoint themselves as the most indisputably correct people. Thus, since my scientific project has been a product of a mere human, it would definitely not benefit from the various campaigning and media support of such parties and proponents.

However, I strongly believe that my project “jurisprudence of philosophy”, once all its sections are completed, God willing, will be a mandatory reference for the Arab philosopher whenever he seeks to build for himself an independent philosophical personality capable of productivity and evolution. I strongly believe also that there will be, sooner or later, a noticeable interest in this project. I am not boasting about what I have written so far, and I am still writing for the sake of promoting my project.

From my own academic experience, I can say that I am certainly aware of the urgent importance and future significance of this project. Even if it does not receive the interest it deserves right away, I have no doubt that the Arab Muslim thinker will soon find himself obliged to choose either to disappear or be innovative. Certainly, there will be some vigilant Arab or Muslim thinkers who will not choose disappearance but will set to work for the sake of innovating so that they may live an honourable intellectual life. They will be interested in knowing about their predecessors’ work on innovation and will search in my books for the knowledge that will respond to their urgent needs. The only exception to this scenario is the possible risk that this religious community, may God protect it, may decay and its values, principles, and goals may be destroyed by its enemies or its own people.

Do your proposed versions of translations have the necessary means to circumvent the reproduction of others’ thoughts?

The way to circumvent reproducing the thought of others is by making the translated texts conform to the flow of the receiver’s thought. The livingness of translated texts is achieved when they correspond to the norms governing the receiver’s thoughts. Such correspondance enables translated texts to be as productive as the vital norms embodied in the receiver’s original thought.

The foundational translation I am arguing for seeks at its best to attain a sort of correspondence between the translated texts and the norms connected

to these authentic thoughts inhabiting the hearts and minds of the Arabs, who then translate these norms, which I call discursive norms, to their people and successors. For instance, if you wish to translate a certain doctrinal concept, you have to find a way to match it with a doctrinal norm inherent in the Arab receiver. If you wish to translate a cognitive concept, you have to find a way to match it with the cognitive norm that is known to this receiver. This discursive matching is the only reliable way of making the translated doctrinal or cognitive concepts have an effect on and be affected by the receiver and his discursive norms.

Therefore, it should be understood that we must translate only the things that correspond with what the receiver already possesses. What cannot correspond, whether contents or words, ought to be left out until you become certain that there is a complete interaction between the target text and its discursive norms. When this interaction is guaranteed, it is then possible to translate the remaining original contents and match them with the previously integrated translations. This second correspondence causes the remaining translated contents to integrate with the receiver's initial norms obtained through the first matching.

The communicative translation is the translation of the remaining content by drawing on the contents attained through matching with the discursive norms during the foundational translation. The remaining foreign words should not be literally translated until the receiver achieves a kind of interaction between all the foreign contents and his discursive norms. The final translation is the translation of the remaining words by drawing on the contents attained through matching with the discursive norms that interact with all the translated contents. We need to bear in mind here that this matching has expanded to include both types of correspondence: the direct partial correspondence that is essential for the foundational translation, and the indirect full content correspondence that is essential for the communicative translation.

Therefore, it is clear that the translations I have proposed can free us from the yoke of emulation because they match the translated texts with the receiver's discursive norms in three stages. As such, they make these translated texts live in the hearts and minds of the receivers. This internal life is undoubtedly the inevitable requirement for any innovative jurisprudence and original creativity.

The second part of your book *Fiqh al-falsafa*, (*Understanding Philosophy*) was recently published under the title *al-Qawl al-falsafi* (*On Philosophical Discourse*). Can you tell us about the new issues you discussed in this book?

Indeed, *al-Qawl al-falsafī* (On Philosophical Discourse) includes three books: *Kitāb al-maḥmūm* (The Book of Concept), *Kitāb al-ta'rif* (The Book of Definition), and *Kitāb al-dalīl* (The Book of Evidence). Only the first book is published. The others will be published soon, God willing.

In the first book, *al-Maḥmūm wa-l-ta'thīl* (*Concept and Etymology*), I have examined how the philosopher develops his concepts and uses them in the context of his speeches. I have derived several ways and methods which the Arab philosopher needs to learn to acquire the ability to innovate his own concepts and free himself from the shackles of emulating others. I have also come up with elaborate analyses of various models taken from scholars and Western philosophers in their own languages (French, German, Latin, and Greek). Additionally, I have assessed the Arab practice of philosophical concepts and examined new issues.

I have summarised the content of this book in the following steps:

- a. The philosopher has his own technique for defining his concepts and using them. A minute understanding of the working of this technique is compulsory for anyone who seeks to create and invent his own concepts, without copying or emulation.
- b. This technique involves a constant movement between two linguistic levels. On the one hand, the level of the phrase is the real and stated aspect of the philosophical concept. On the other hand, the level of the sign is related to the metaphoric or concealed aspect.
- c. The philosopher derives the conceptual and phrasal aspects from the truths that are stated in the field of philosophical knowledge; conversely, he derives the aspect of signs from the determinants and constituents of his discursive field, that is, the field of his interaction with his people.
- d. The aspect of signs related to the concept includes concealed indications that are useful in the philosophical questioning of this concept; it includes also concealed structures that are useful in logical reasoning by means of and regarding the concept.
- e. What is essential for innovation in philosophical concepts is the act of drawing on symbolic content in determining phrasal content until the evidence counters that.

It is worth noting that the different conceptual methods that I have elicited from philosophical discourse have a significance that is not limited to this discourse. They include other literary, intellectual, and scientific discourses and benefit anyone who wishes to create concepts on the basis of his discursive field. I have provided the Arab reader with these conceptual methods in the hope of inducing him to create knowledge that corresponds to his field, as is the case with the knowledge others create.

Averroisms

Why am I not Averroist?

Why should we not be Averroists?



As you know, Averroes was interested in Sharia and philosophy. Is he, then, considered a philosopher or an Islamic jurist (faḳīh) or both?

It is true that Averroes was a jurist as well as a philosopher and a physician. This is not surprising, as incorporating different branches of knowledge, or let us say encyclopedism, was a distinctive feature of Islamic culture. What is actually astonishing is that Averroes strove to preserve the independence and particularity of each science. This is attributed to his strong belief in the distinctness of the subjects and their methods.

Therefore, if it is plausible to say that Averroes is both a jurist and philosopher, it is implausible to say that he was a jurist philosopher, as this would indicate that his jurisprudential training culminated in his particular philosophical judgment (*ijtihād*), which is somehow akin to the philosophical judgment on the objectives of the Sharia (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿa*) which al-Shāṭibī advanced. There is no trace in his work of any special wisdom that derives its spirit or at least its principles from his jurisprudential and legal practice. It is equally implausible to say that he is a philosopher jurist since this would mean that his philosophical training led him to use his philosophical knowledge in the jurisprudential field as is the case with al-Ghazālī's use of a logical device in the science of jurisprudence. There is no trace in his work of any special jurisprudence which derives its values or at least obtains its orientation from his philosophical practice. In short, Averroes was not innovative in philosophy via jurisprudence. Similarly, he was not innovative in jurisprudence via philosophy.

What is the secret behind the fame of Averroes? Did Westerners make him known through their explanation of his work? Or did the Arabs themselves recognise his importance without relying on the Westerners' explanation?

The fame of Averroes is credited to the need of Western intellectuals during the Middle Ages for someone who could explain the philosophy of Aristotle and enable them to encounter the majesty of ecclesiastic theology. Thus, Europe embarked during this period on translating Aristotle's books on psychology, naturalism, and post-naturalism, which were not known to the Europeans. The latter found Averroes to be the best interpreter of the new contents of these translations, as he seemed the most capable of clarifying and giving a detailed explanation of the fundamentals of Aristotelianism (*mashshā'īyya*). The emergence of Aristotle's philosophy in Europe destabilised the authority of Augustinian-oriented theology. Roman Catholic intellectuals found in Averroes the best support for their opposing claims against this theological authority.

In addition, the fame of Averroes is attributed also to the disagreement of the Catholic intellectuals with regard to his philosophy and the church's issuance of a decision banning the discussion and exploration of his philosophy. These intellectuals were divided into two conflicting groups: the proponents who were led by de Bryant, who called for prioritising the fundamentals of philosophy over those of doctrine; the opponents who were led by Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. Moreover, the church clerics issued several pronouncements banning the examination of specific Averroistic topics as well as the teaching of his doctrine in the universities, namely the University of Paris.

These different factors: "the need for an interpreter", "the need for a supporter", "the involvement in conflict", and "deliverance of formal legal opinions to forbid something", contributed to the inculcation of Averroes's name within European scientific and intellectual circles. Since the modernist Arabs were basically emulators, rather than innovators, it is not surprising that they made Averroes as famous among themselves as he was among the Europeans, even though they did not experience the same conditions as those the Europeans experienced.

What is the purpose behind the call for adhering to the philosophy of Averroes in the West and in our world? Can we consider Averroism as an unprecedented phenomenon?

The hidden goal behind the call to adhere to Averroism is to spread the spirit of secularism among Muslims and Arabs, just as it is widespread in Western philosophical thought.¹ There are two pieces of evidence for this:

¹ It seems to me that the use of the term secular as an equivalent of the French term (*laïque*) is not accurate for three reasons. First, (*laïque*) is the equivalent of *clerc* (man of religion), whereas in Arabic "secular" does not have *clerc* as an equivalent. On the contrary, using the

On the one hand, Latin Averroism, in the thirteenth century, was known for its circumvention of the theological philosophy of the church. It relied on a secular understanding of the philosophy of Averroes. It considers this philosophy as premised on two kinds of principles, both of which oppose established theological philosophy. The first is concerned with the materialist principles that oppose the religious beliefs common in Christian society. An instance of this is the unity of mind and words since antiquity and the denial of Divine providence, freedom, eternity of the soul, and miracles. The other type of principle is methodological; these methodological principles claim the equivalence of religious and scientific truths.

On the other hand, the spirit of Latin Averroism, which is based on the principle of total separation between religion and philosophy, continued until the seventeenth century, gradually paving the way for the phenomenon of detachment from religion which was expanding among the leaders of the Enlightenment, and whose influence on the modernists was profound. It is thus not surprising that Averroes is designated the pioneer of rationalists, secularists, and modernists.

Consequently, the willingness to adhere to Averroes was tantamount to the willingness to adhere to secularism as manifested in its three stages: The Latin, Enlightenment, and modern stages.

There have been boisterous intellectual celebrations all over the Arab world commemorating the eighth-hundred-year anniversary of Averroes's death. Why is Averroes more intellectually celebrated than others, in your opinion? What was his personal contribution to philosophy, given the fact that all his philosophical works were devoted to explaining and summarising Aristotle's work?

term to refer to men of religion would be more accurate than using it to refer to other people, let alone using it to refer to their opposites, because *clercs* refers to scientists '*ulamā*' (scholar of religion) in the Islamic tradition and the term secular '*ilmānī*, is used to refer to people with scientific attributes. Second, the term "secular" is linguistically more accurate than the French term "*scientiste*", the person who believes that science can solve all the problems of humanity. Third, the attribute "secular" carries a very positive emotional and moral meaning that does not exist in its French equivalent; that is, the attributed meaning to secular in Arabic acquires a new sense of making the *clerc* look like the agent that fights against science. And this is not true at least in the Islamic pragmatic use. Therefore, the closest term to the performative sense of (*laïque*) is worldly (*dunyawī*). This latter has "religious" as an equivalent in Arabic, in the same way (*laïque*) is the equivalent of "*clerc*" in French. If we take into consideration another synonym of (*laïque*) which is "*séculier*" derived from "*siècle*" (century) "worldly life that changes according to the times," it turns out that the best Arabic equivalent of (*laïque*) is atheist (*dahrānī*).

There is no doubt that celebrations of our nation's scholarly luminaries, which awaken the nation's memory and revive its determination, are desirable. However, over-celebrating and exaggerating the value of Averroes to the extent of establishing him as a legend or prodigy is more harmful than beneficial. This will mislead rather than revive national memory and will suppress rather than awaken its determination. It may be that the intense celebration of Averroes among people is no more than a celebration of a misleading legend and an imagined prodigy.

Some of our authors and critics seized the opportunity offered by these intellectual ceremonies to hastily contend that Averroes was a pioneering figure of modernism. Worse than that, other authors have attributed the creation of modernism to Averroes. Still worse is that others, in their unrestrained ambitions and aspirations, have shamelessly evoked the spirit of Averroes, having the temerity to tell us how to understand Averroes. Even worse, they have dared dictate to Averroes himself how he should have been and how he should have written. This is an unparalleled illusion!

These authors and critics became lost in Averroes's maze of modernism, as every one of them was driven by personal interests. Some of them were seeking to please their Western or Orientalist masters and comply with their dictates. Others were seeking to imitate the foreigners, owing to their lack of confidence in their own knowledge. Other groups were aspiring to join modernism and universalism. Some camps wanted to eliminate their rivals or win their battle against the Islamist movement. Still others intended to endorse values that would protect their interests, such as their understanding of rationalism, secularism, globalisation, and human rights.

I have been perplexed by this great intellectual sedition, where what is right or wrong is confused as if it were caused by jugglers rather than by intellectuals, as if it were created by elites rather than by enlightened people. If I had not had previous knowledge of Averroes as a philosopher, a theologian, and a jurist, I would have been a victim of such sedition, much like the majority of his audience. Human beings are innately prepared to believe in everything conveyed to them for the first time and do not immediately oppose or doubt translated knowledge. When I decided to examine the extraordinary characteristics those scholars attributed to Averroes, I was neither convinced of their justifications nor satisfied with their interpretations. This is due both to their misunderstanding of some of his texts and their misunderstanding of those characteristics.

If others seemed to support Averroes absolutely and adopt his thought, I chose not to do so. I can never be an Averroist. My evidence against Averroism is no less powerful than their supporting evidence. Indeed, my evidence is

much more powerful than theirs as it tackles the weakest aspects of the work of Averroes. Only stubborn, arrogant people can disagree with my evidence. Their evidence deals with this aspect in a way that stimulates disagreement among many scholars. The weakest aspect of Averroes's work is due to his reproduction of Aristotle in the field of philosophy. Both predecessors and successors have agreed that Averroes mimics Aristotle.

More than that, Averroes is the greatest emulator of Greek philosophers when compared with the other philosophers of Islam. This emulation is not only related to the various annotations, explanations, interpretations, summaries, and compilations he made of his first teacher's works. It also includes the compilations that he contributed, which researchers have considered innovative writings, namely his three famous books: *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (*The Incoherence of the Incoherence*), *al-Kashf 'an manāhij al-adilla fi 'aqā'id al-milla* (*The Exposition of the Methods of Proof in Religious Doctrines*), and *Faṣl al-maqāl* (*On the Harmony between Religion and Philosophy or The Decisive Treatise*). One need only consider these books briefly to discover that the first book is a kind of defence of imitation in response to those who opposed it, such as al-Ghazālī, and the second book is again a kind of defence of imitation against the dialectical theologians (*mutakallimūn*) as represented by al-Ash'arī's school, and the third book is, similarly, a sort of defence of imitation against the clergy as represented by the jurists (*fuqahā'*).

What is worse regarding Averroes's call for imitation in philosophy is that he calls us to imitate those whose philosophical thought dates back to remote history, for he was separated from Aristotle by fifteen centuries, as if the era of civilisation that Muslims lived through never existed; and as if the Muslim philosophical contributions of that period do not count at all—and this is mere misinformation.

In fact, Averroes established the fundamentals of imitation in philosophy and remained its salient, unrivalled promoter. He justified and facilitated the practice of imitation for the Arab modernists. Therefore, it is no surprise to see them rushing to embrace modern Western thought—the same way Averroes rushed to embrace Aristotle, explaining, and interpreting—believing they had entered the age of modernity. Indeed, they had only increased their distance from modernity. Is it possible after all to take part in modernity in the absence of the capability and aptitude for innovation?

There is nothing that I wholly abhor other than imitation, no matter how right it is, as I find it the most harmful path in the nation's life. Let alone if this imitation is patently wrong, as huge historical and discursive differences between others and their imitators are utterly disregarded. I confidently steer clear of Averroism in my strong belief that the revival of the Islamic nation will

not be possible by means of the thought of Averroes, even if his proponents have readied all their intellectual arsenals to enforce it among people, urging and coercing them until they assume and dissolve into another identity as snow melts in the ocean. Their wish to revive this nation through imitation, while keeping their Arab and Islamic identity intact, is as impossible as making a camel pass through the eye of a needle.

Does not Averroes have any particular Islamic philosophy that can distinguish him from others?

Generally, the concept of Islamic philosophy entails some elaboration. It can refer to an original philosophy; that is, a philosophy that is free of imitation and based on authentic Islamic knowledge that fulfils the requirements of the Arab-Islamic discursive field at the level of belief, language, and knowledge. Islamic philosophy in this sense is absent from the point of view of Averroes. It can refer to an open philosophy, which is a transferred philosophy but intermixed with Islamic knowledge and adapted to the Islamic discursive field. Islamic philosophy in this sense is also absent for Averroes. Lastly, it can refer to a disconnected philosophy; that is, it is a transferred philosophy but it has not intermixed with Islamic knowledge and has not adapted to the requirements of the Islamic discursive field. Islamic philosophy in this sense is, in reality, what can be found in Averroes.

Another way of saying this is that he stripped Aristotle's philosophy of all the Islamic influences that resulted from changes and modifications to Greek concepts that earlier philosophers of Islam had introduced to adapt it to the Islamic discursive field. He applied all the answers that his teacher Aristotle had developed in response to the questions he faced in his Greek discursive field. Averroes drew on the internal logic of Aristotle's thought rather than on what was required by the new Islamic context in which this thought was produced. Therefore, his philosophy was disconnected from Islamic understanding and closely connected to Western reason. Hence, it is unsurprising that his first followers were Jewish and Christian foreigners rather than Muslim disciples.

Averroes called for the philosophical interpretation of legal (juristic) texts, what do you think about this interpretation?

Obviously, Averroes postulated some limits and restrictions for the types of texts that should be interpreted and the way that should be followed in this interpretation. The same restriction applied to the group of scholars (*'ulamā'*)

who should undertake this interpretation. He made use of a list of restrictions common in the principles of interpretive practice as it was developed by the Muslims, namely the *'ulamā'* of jurisprudence principles.

These limits and restrictions, no matter how accurate and useful they seem to be, are not enough to attain the right interpretation of legal statements. This can be clarified in two ways:

Firstly, these limits and restrictions do not hamper the act of interpreting what is manifest or visible (*ẓāhir*) in its real meaning. Averroes is known for formulating his rules of interpretation in accordance with hidden (*khaḥfīy*) legal statements—these include analogies and instances; however he did not hesitate to interpret manifest statements. The evidence for this is his interpretation of the two verses: “So take warning, O people of vision,” “but no one knows its hidden meanings except God. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: We believe in the Book.” He made the meaning of “take warning” (*ītibār*) as the analogy and the meaning of *those who are firmly grounded in knowledge* (*wa-al-rāsikhūnna fī al-'ilm*) as referring to competent interpreters who use demonstrative reason, both meanings completely contradict the aim of the context. The context of the first verse implies the learning of a lesson, and the context of the second verse implies that “*those who are firmly grounded in knowledge*” do not seek the interpretation of the Obscure (verses that have no one straightforward meaning) in contrast to those who are sceptical.

Secondly, those limits and restrictions do not guarantee an agreement between the interpreters who use demonstrative reasons. The method of demonstrative reason is supposed to lead to agreement and certainty among its people. However, those who follow demonstrative reason, according to Averroes, diverge and differ in their interpretation owing to their difference in the understanding of reason. If this is the case, the interpretive advantage that is attributed to the method of demonstrative reason by means of persuasive and argumentative dialectics should be banished.

This should be the case, provided that we take for granted the legitimacy of Aristotle-oriented philosophical interpretation which Averroes adopted. Choosing not to believe in this legitimacy is, however, correct. This can be explained by the fact that the philosophical interpretation that can deal with the legal text is not the Aristotelian philosophical interpretation; it is, instead, the philosophical interpretation that is derived from divine Islamic knowledge. In addition to this, the rationality of philosophical interpretation has limits that are transgressed by the contents of some juristic legal texts, which not only disturb its whole meaning when subjected to the law of reasoning but also convey other meanings instead of the original ones, resulting in a kind of distortion of the intended verbal message.

Most modern Arab and Muslim scholars relied on Averroes in building their thought and philosophy, whereas you chose to build your philosophy on al-Ghazālī, why?

Adhering to Averroism has been instrumental in attaining scholarly legitimacy for some Arab intellectuals and has become synonymous with obtaining a passport to enter into the circle of thinkers. This is an excess that alarms wise people as it plainly impoverishes Arab-Islamic reason rather than enriching it as some of these intellectuals are wont to believe. Those who think from only one perspective are never equal to those who think from different perspectives. I have no intention of raising the issue of the great intellectual sedition that has resulted from imitation, which is in turn incompatible with innovation. Moreover, I do not want to look into whether Averroes is worthy of this hype. I just see him as an imitator who cannot be relied on to renew Arab-Islamic philosophical thought.

As for what you call my choice of al-Ghazālī as a reaction to others' adherence to Averroes, I would simply say that it is not completely correct. I did not claim that al-Ghazālī is the correct thinker with the same zeal the supporters of Averroes expressed. I did not see his work as the source of my inspiration, and I did not do more research on him than I did on Averroes. However, I think al-Ghazālī is a great thinker whose colossal mind could not be fathomed by our contemporaries. They treated him unfairly and did not give him his due.

Indeed, some aspects of my thought and behaviour intersect with those of al-Ghazālī. This was no more than a coincidence. For instance, we both loved engaging with logic, though I totally disagree with his Aristotelian tendency in logic, which is comparable to Averroes. He believed that logic is the same for all people and in all areas, even in other worlds that are different from this world and its natural laws. This should mainly denote a logic whose fundamentals the Greeks established. Al-Ghazālī was, therefore, adamant about integrating it into the Islamic sciences and adopting it, even after his Sufi experience. We both devoted ourselves to studying the principles of jurisprudence (*'ilm al-uṣūl*), though I have not written on this as he did. Nevertheless, I disagree with his attitude toward the relationship between logic and jurisprudence principles. According to him, logic is part of jurisprudence, while I believe that jurisprudence principles are part of logic owing to other reasons. We both devoted ourselves to the study of philosophy and learned about the traces of cultural relativism, though, I do not doubt the utility of this philosophy or discredit its followers as he did. We both went through the Sufi experience in the Sunni manner and beheld its sublime aspect; however, we did not have the same reasons for pursuing this experience.

Thus, it is clear to me that I am not much of an imitator of al-Ghazālī as were the imitators of Averroes. It was a matter of divine will and mysterious wisdom that we shared many traits.

Many Arab thinkers have agreed on accusing al-Ghazālī of assassinating reason. To what extent is this accusation valid, given that you have studied his work extensively?

If they are insisting on issuing these accusations, I assure you that the problem is not due to a shortcoming in al-Ghazālī's thought as they tended to believe; this shortcoming is essentially connected to two problems. The first is related to the great defects in the vision and concept of reason prevalent among these Arab thinkers. Reason is not one thing, as they believe, but a multiplicity of reasons; this is what they cannot assimilate. Moreover, the only reason that they know is not open or productive; it is the oldest and most infertile one. By contrast, the reason that al-Ghazālī knew seeks to move from the narrow oneness of reason to a broad multiplicity of reasons. They compared their ancient oneness of reason to his forward-looking multiple reasons; they falsified his views and made a huge mistake.

The second cause for this wrong accusation has to do with a noticeable weakness in the linguistic and scientific equipment these accusers used. It is likely that their insufficient practice and unfamiliarity with the specificities of these human languages impeded their ability to assimilate the fact that the limits and boundaries of reason can possibly extend between languages. That is, the limit of reason in a certain language does not correspond with its limit in another language; it may even contradict it.

Regarding contradiction, neither limit is less rational than the other. Their poor acquaintance with the specificities of scientific methods hampers their assimilation of the possibility of reversing the phases of reason between different types of knowledge or disciplines. That is, the stage of reason in one discipline may not conform to its stage in another discipline and may even contradict it. Again, regarding contradiction, neither of them is less rational. Instead, one type of knowledge, no matter how abstract and pure, can be approached through several rationalities from different stages. For instance, logical knowledge is believed to be one since it reaches the ultimate abstraction. The principles of reason used to consist of three principles: the principle of identity, the principle of non-contradiction, and the principle of the exclusive third.

However, we can today come up with minute logical patterns which can annul some of those well-known principles. We can thus believe that one spe-

cific thing can be another thing (altered, *mutaqallib*), or it can be simultaneously itself and another thing (contradictory, *muta'āriḍ*), or it can be neither itself nor another one (intermediary, *mutawassit*). With these patterns breaching the inherited principles of reason, it can be said that their rationality and what they produce are much more advanced than the old rationality which held to those principles and on whose basis those thinkers judged the philosopher of Islam al-Ghazālī and his correct view regarding the multiplicity of reasons in opposition to their own invalid opinion about the oneness of reason.

We notice that Ibn Khaldun is not always present in your diverse thought as is the case with others. Is there any reason for this lack of interest in Ibn Khaldun?

This is a very interesting question that no one has asked me before. Some believe that I am not interested in Ibn Khaldun, as they cannot imagine studying him from a perspective that is different from the one that dominates among his researchers. Indeed, Ibn Khaldun is present in all my works, though in a way that is not common to those Arab researchers and thinkers, for they are interested only in the content of his thought, indifferent to the ways and methods of his thinking and expressing of ideas, which they believe Ibn Khaldun had to avoid in the belief that these methods were full of shortcomings. Some of them have complained about the obscurity of his manner of thinking and the intricacy of his manner of expressing ideas. Nonetheless, I was concerned with these issues and I perceived them as perfection rather than a shortcoming. I devoted an early study to his work, entitled *Ṭabīr at al-istidlāl fī al-naṣṣ al-Khaldūnī* (*The Nature of Deduction in Ibn Khaldun's Text*). It is included in my book *Language and Balance*.

In fact, the bond between me and Ibn Khaldun is so strong, not only because I have directly learned from and been influenced by him, but also because the philosophy of logic on which he built his thought is so close to the philosophy of logic on which I have built my thought. The following three principles elucidate this philosophy:

Concerning the first principle, knowledge is thought to have two sources, one is original and the other is secondary. The former is related to natural thought, which is purely instinctive and has a broad domain; this thought is necessary for all people. The latter is related to logical reasoning, which constitutes a kind of artificial frame to which we subject natural thought in order to render it as objective science. I have continued insisting in my different studies on the need to differentiate between natural logic and artificial logic, or between natural and artificial philosophy.

As for the second principle, scientific writing should be deductive; Ibn Khaldun's *al-Muqaddima* (*Introduction*) is written in this way. Every chapter deals with an issue that Ibn Khaldun subjects to deduction using the best logical sequencings, drawing on previous deduction of theorems or what seems like axiomatics in the past or the present. I have decided to commit to using this method of writing. I was, however, trying hard not to make readers feel aversion to this method, especially knowing that these readers cannot endure exhausting their minds and reasoning faculties with unfamiliar methods and thoughts.

The third principle revolves around subjecting the Arabic language to scientific terminology. Apparently, Ibn Khaldun would coin new terms to fit his scientific purposes. I myself do not hesitate to do the same thing whenever I am faced with a certain scientific necessity. I, however, have other reasons for this tendency to create new coinages. It is my personal goal to free the technique of creating terminology in the Arabic language from dependency on foreign languages. My intention is to empower this language to use its own special dynamicity in the process of creating terminology. I usually introduce terminology related to specific scientific content that has no accurate equivalences in other languages. I rely mostly on the particularity of derivativeness and semantic lexica of the Arabic language.

Sufisms

He who is seeking philosophical perfection should look forward
to the horizon of spiritual beauty



Your publication: *Religious Practice and the Renewal of Reason*, represents an attempt to write your autobiography in relation to Sufism; what was your spiritual experience? Was it similar to al-Ghazālī's experience?

It is true that my book *Religious Practice and the Renewal of Reason* is directly related to my experience with Sufism; however, it is not an autobiography as it seems to be from the first glimpse. I did not mention anything about my life, except for six pages at the beginning of the first edition which was published about ten years ago. It is indeed the fruit of the knowledge I have reaped from this experience. The proof that it is not an autobiography is the deductive construction I have followed in this book. I even consider it my strongest book in terms of its complying with the requirements of logical structuring. This was not a matter of a passing coincidence, but it was intentionally in coherence with the purpose of this book, which the title suggests. The book had, in fact, many purposes.

My primary purpose was to elucidate how the spiritual experience, in contrast with what was inculcated in the human mind for many ages, is never incongruent with mental knowledge. Instead, it can be a contributory factor for the enhancement and penetration of this knowledge.

How can spiritual experience enhance mental knowledge? How is that possible knowing that we inherently live the spiritual experience, whereas mental knowledge is acquired through thinking and theoretical examination of external matters?

In fact, spiritual experience does not provide you with the objective characteristics of things, procedural methods, specific rules, or fixed laws that the practice of theoretical reason allows before involvement in this experience.

However, it provides you with something that is not less valuable or influential than the benefits allowed by the experience of theoretical examination. It provides you with a set of values, purposes, and meanings derived from the actual practice. When you are equipped with these spiritual values, you will see different prospects for exploiting, orienting, restructuring, and arranging these characteristics, methods, rules, and objective laws that are allowed through theoretical examination. These prospects are not possible in the absence of these values. Human minds differ in accordance with their difference in the prospects of the investment potential of things. Thus, the depth and breadth of your mind depend on your acquisition of these values; that is, the extent of your penetration into the spiritual experience.

For this reason, I disagree completely with Averroes, and Ibn Bājā before him, who thought that the Sufi experience, being practical, does not benefit theoretical knowledge in any way. This is due to his Aristotelian insistence on separating theory and practice. I believe that this is absolutely wrong because practice, in all its different forms, constantly influences theoretical examination, which constantly expands its means and refines its structures, thanks to this practical effect. Indeed, this effect increases in parallel with progress in the levels of practice; it increases also whenever the practice becomes more transparent and sophisticated. For instance, nobody can deny that sensory activity influences mental examination, and sensory activity does not have only one level. The effect on mental examination increases as the progress of these sensory levels increases. One can then imagine the effects of spiritual activity, which is undoubtedly more refined and transparent than sensory activity, and has a great and far-reaching effect on mental examination. And since spiritual activity has also endless levels, when compared with its sensory counterpart, the effect will achieve its greatest strength.

Assuming that the lowest level of spiritual activity has more influence on mental examination than the highest level of sensory activity—let alone the effect of the highest level of spiritual activity (its influence is so remarkable and incomparable)—it turns out therefore that spiritual experience has a weighty influence on mental knowledge. This influence is much greater than that exerted by sensory experience. It enriches the capabilities of mental knowledge, enhances its levels, and extends its limits.

This is my first aim for the book I mentioned. As for my second aim, I wanted to show how the cognitive faculties of human beings are interconnected despite their difference. There is no such thing as a purely sensory, mental, or spiritual faculty. Instead, some aspects of the mind exist in the sensory faculty, as there exist some aspects of the spirit in the mental faculties and vice versa. That is to say, there is some trace of the mind in the spiritual faculty, which par-

allels the traces of sensation that exist in the mental faculty. If the premise of the connection between these different cognitive and mental faculties is justified, it is right then to posit that spiritual experience is complementary to mental examination; it is not disconnected from it or even disruptive of it as some people have wrongly claimed.

As for the third aim, I wanted to demonstrate that the mind has various and differing levels. The lowest level of the mind parallels the lowest level of the sensory faculty because the mind is believed to preserve some of its density and roughness. The highest level of the mind is closer to the highest level of the spiritual faculty because the mind has already been exposed to and affected by the beginnings of spiritual subtlety to a greater or lesser degree.

As for whether I have lived the Sufi experience the same way al-Ghazālī did, I would say that we agree only on embarking on the experience. I did not start this journey as a doubter or fugitive as al-Ghazālī did. He escaped to Sufism involuntarily, while I came to it willingly. He was running away from two forces; the first is the force of power and renown that was compelling him to involve himself in intrigues, conspiracies, and conflicts for authority. The second one was the force of philosophical uncertainty that overwhelmed him because of his long engagement with philosophy. By contrast, my involvement with Sufism was motivated by two entirely different reasons. The first is related to my desire to strengthen my love and bond with God rather than escape from other forces. It was an overwhelming pleasure that kept me away from all other seductions. The second reason was that I wanted to verify the nature of meaning that is beyond the stage of philosophical reason: is it irrational entirely? Or, is it rational somehow? My long involvement with philosophy—even my concern with logic, which is based more on deduction or problematisation—did not lead me to doubt at all the truth of fideism. This corroborates what someone says “Too much philosophy begets certainty, and too little philosophy begets scepticism.” This stands in contrast to the philosophy of Cartesian doubt which misled many generations for a long time.

My concern with philosophy did not change my opinion about the role of spiritual experience in attaining more knowledge regarding the truth of fideism as happened to Averroes, who was attending to stories of Sufis, such as Ibn ‘Arabī, and he was even spying on them as he did with Abī ‘Abbās al-Sabtī. In my opinion, this kind of intellectual eavesdropping is evidence of his shaken faith in Aristotelian absolute knowledge; he was seeking the possible existence of another knowledge besides Aristotelianism.

It is quite clear that you have emphasised the value of deduction (istidlāl), what is your stance toward intuitive (ḥadsīyya) knowledge?

It is true that many philosophers distinguish between deduction and intuition to the extent of dichotomising them; however, I think that this dichotomy is replete with pretensions. They are both—as the same philosophers agree—mental perceptions that are only different in the fact that the first is a direct perception, while the other is indirect. Therefore, it could be said that the difference between intuition, direct mental perception, deduction, and indirect mental perception is only relative. To justify this, I can only mention that the same thing can be an intuition for some people but a deduction for others. What is considered obvious and elementarily intuitive in a given logical order can be rationally verified in another order.

So, you do not agree with Bergson's argument that there is a metaphysical intuition, which we call in our Islamic tradition the Sufi through inspiration (*ilhām*) or illumination (*ishrāq*)?

It seems, according to what you have said, that there are two types of intuition: mental intuition which can be attributed to deduction, and metaphysical intuition, that is, perceptivity, which cannot be subjected to deduction. But if we assume that metaphysical intuition is of a mental nature, it can then be subjected to a special deductive act which I would call encapsulated deduction (*al-istidlāl al-maṭwī*). That is, there are some deductions in which there features only a part of the introduction or none at all, as they depend on the receiver to work them out from the context.

Similarly, intuition is a sort of deduction with encapsulated introductions because the agent of intuition has sufficient practice and deep familiarity with the topic of intuition to the extent that what he perceives intuitively, without any intermediaries, cannot be accomplished by others without intermediaries or deduction. It is through interaction with things that human beings come to feel their existence. Such an interaction can transform deduction regarding things into intuition. If I may compare this encapsulated intuition with something organic, I would say that intuitions envelop deductions in the same way that genes envelop human life. This is similar to the saying “The sign is beyond the words.” That is, the interaction with the content of the words becomes so frequent and dominant to the extent that one needs only a sign to obtain the whole meaning.

In this way, both intuition and deduction assume the positions of two languages or faces of the same truth. I totally disagree here with Descartes and Bergson and other intuitionists. If someone asks me what is intuition (*hids*), I would say “intuition is an encapsulated deduction”. If they ask me what is sensitivity (*dawq*), I would say “sensitivity is an encapsulated reason”; if by contrast,

they ask me what is deduction, I would say “deduction is a refracted intuition (*ḥids manshūr*)”, and if they ask me what is reason I would say “reason has a prism (*al-‘aql dhū manshūr*).”

From your own Sufi and philosophical experience, how do you express your aesthetic opinion toward art, innovation, public speaking, theatre, and music? Do you have an aesthetic theory in this field?

I think that a person who has no appreciation of the aesthetic value of things is not complete because human beings have two dimensions. The first one is the sublime (*jalālī*) dimension which refers to inherently empowering forces such as knowledge, thought, logic, industry, and so on. The second one is the aesthetic (*jamālī*) dimension which refers to inherent human values, be they literature, painting, theatre, music, or similar values, and which provide humans with refinement. The complete human should combine both dimensions in his private and public life because he is a balanced and normal human. He is as much strong as he is sensitive. His strength emanates from his reason, and his refinement stems from his taste; therefore, education in the sublime dimension for both the young and adults should be accompanied by education in the aesthetic dimension so that balance and normality can be realised.

Every philosopher should have a theory of aesthetics and another of sublimity. My theory of aesthetics has three characteristics that no other philosophers share with me.

Firstly, beauty or aesthetics (*jamāl*) is a beneficial pleasure that enhances human determination toward perfection. The more beauty you attain the more your humanity is elevated. Once you attain this level, you will seek another greater pleasure that would raise you to another level of humanity, and so on and so forth in a kind of dialectics between pleasure and perfection. Each pleasure takes you to perfection and each perfection takes you to pleasure.

Secondly, the aesthetic value, in contrast to the dominant belief among those involved in art and literature, is never at loggerheads with the moral-ethical value. Beauty has many levels; its lowest is near-visible beauty, while its highest is the distant-invisible beauty. There are countless levels between them. Morals and ethics also have levels; the lowest is the restricted visible moral-ethical, while the highest is the free invisible moral-ethical. There are countless levels between them. Once your level is raised in one of these values, you draw nearer to the other value; when you reach the highest level in one of them, you reach the highest level in the other. They are only separated in the lowest levels, whereas on the highest levels, they stay together. What is extremely aesthetic is also extremely moral-ethical and vice versa.

Thirdly, if a nation feels unable to contribute to its civilisation surroundings, using its sublime dimension that revolves around power and strength, it can always contribute to this surrounding through its aesthetic dimension that revolves around sensitivity and kindness. Thus, I argue that our thinkers should consider seriously the adequate aesthetic ways our Arab-Islamic world should contribute to this new century since there seem to be no opportunities for our contribution to the supreme dimension, power, and strength. I am certain that if we are guided in these ways, we will have many aesthetic values to offer to the people of the new millennium, who will need us more than we need their supreme power.

Before I obtained any theory on aesthetics, I completed many studies as well as much creative writing regarding it. I will tell a secret that many of my researchers, students, and followers are unaware of. I took a course in aesthetics and the history of art at the Institute of fine art in Paris while I was a student of philosophy between 1967–1968. I also wrote poetry at an early age, and it was good according to the critics. I willingly stopped during the war of June 1967 between the Arabs and Israel. My last poem was entitled “On My Way to the Poem”. My decision was similar to the Arab poet Imru’ al-Qays when he said, “Let it be enjoyable today and let tomorrow take care of itself”. I stopped writing poetry for good, not out of contempt or rejection but to devote myself to intellectual endeavours. I wanted to learn the workings of the mind that defeated the Arabs, despite the greatness of their history and their immense population. I have achieved my goal, thanks to God; I have learnt more about that mind’s secret than it probably knows itself. Perhaps I will return to the life of poetry after the completion of my intellectual project, as poetry is said to transport the spirit to remote worlds.

Will you tell us about justifications for this possible return to poetry?

I can mention three justifications that have attracted my attention. First, prose is not the basis of the art of speech as is widely assumed, rather, it is poetry. For me, when the first human spoke, he did not speak prose but poetry. To elaborate, the first speech was metaphorical rather than real because truth is a mental construction whereas metaphor is an instinctive given. This latter came before the former. Metaphor is only complete when it resides in poetry. Undoubtedly, the first human used metaphor perfectly. Speech then is poetry in origin, whereas prose is poetry whose metaphorical origin has been stripped off by the mind.

If I return to poetry, I will return first to the practice of speech because it is the human instinct in its perfection. Thus, my aim in returning to poetry will

be to retain and perfect my humanity. Is there anything one would prefer to the perfection of his humanity?

Second, the language of existence is poetic and not prosaic. Our inherent conditions and our surrounding worlds are not lifeless and stagnant, mute and speechless. Instead, they are alive and vocal. It is clear that their life and speaking do not appear in verbal words that are issued by these surrounding things and conditions which our emotions recognise. The truth of poetry is that it is speech that is borne out of perceiving signs, in that signs that poetry conveys are the same signs that our inherent conditions and our surroundings convey. Therefore, poetic speech is inclusive of all parts of existence, conditions, and things.

If I return to poetry, I prefer to return to this connection with the world in its entirety because it represents the perfection of human existence. The aim of my return to poetry would be the perfection of my existence. Is there anything one would aspire to have than this perfection of existence?

Third, it is poetry, and not prose, which transports us beyond abstract reason; prose is a mere trace of this abstract reason. Exploring what is behind the veil of reason must be accomplished through another means than this trace of reason. These means are made possible by poetry, which enables the human being to penetrate the seven strata reach hidden worlds and endless horizons.¹

If I return to poetry, I will want to dive into endless oceans because through this my spirituality will witness a new resurrection. The aim of my return to poetry would be to renew my spirit; is there anything one would rather renew than his spirit?

¹ "Seven strata" is a crude translation of *al-sab' al-ṭibāq* which refers in the Qur'ān to the seven heavens: "He Who created the seven heavens one above another" (Q 67:3).

Fundamentalisms

Are not the fundamentalist movements in need of a second Islamic awakening?

The first awakening was partial and political; the second should be total and ethical.



How can we introduce Islam today?

This is a very specific and embarrassing question; there has never been an epoch in which Islam ought to be presented in a most worthy manner than the time we are living in today. This is due to the following interrelated reasons: the overall decadence the Muslims have experienced and the huge pervasive progress Western civilisation has achieved. The gap between the backwardness of Muslims and the progress of Westerners grows wider with the passing of time. Muslims are, then, required more than at any time before to acquaint themselves with using scientific and practical means to help clarify the truth of Islam for others and convince them of the importance of this religion as a principal component in today's global civilisation. It is the history and tradition of more than a billion people. However, I have a different opinion about these means. What most of our thinkers and rulers tend to do is to enumerate the useful values of belonging to the West. Then they try to show how Islam contains these values as well, for example, when they discuss civil liberties, democracy, nationalism, human rights, women's rights, children's rights, civil society, and so on and so forth.

Even when these values are proven to exist in Islam and comply with modern requirements, the West will still insist on clinging to its values, considering Islamic values as a mere addition. What our rulers and thinkers are doing is not, in reality, demonstrating how much the West needs Islam. Instead, it is demonstrating how this religion does not contain values that Western culture does not hold. Moreover, since Muslims do not in fact practise these values in the way Westerners practise them, they confirm for the West the belief that this religion is useless.

Mistakenly, these rulers and thinkers misrepresented the image of Islam in their attempt to improve it. This misrepresentation was too grave to the extent that their interlocutors began to see this religion as a superfluous addition that has no use when compared to what is deemed as a useful obligation (*fard*). On another note, the group that opposed these rulers and thinkers, and they are the very few so-called fundamentalists, has also distorted the image of Islam. However, their distortion of Islam comes from their violent reactions against their interlocutors; an act which they deemed necessary to face these inimical interlocutors who deserved no clemency. Therefore, Islam has become in the eyes of these interlocutors a global curse that should be eradicated, rather than a divine gift that is valuable. They believe that the world is much better without a religion that is in the best case a superfluous addition and in the worst case a merciless curse.

This is the image that Muslims, intentionally or unintentionally, presented to their interlocutors about their Islamic religion toward the end of the last century. It is the image that the West is exploiting during the age of globalisation to strengthen its reasoning and authority.

The means of the aforementioned thinkers or fundamentalists are not qualified to represent Islam in the right way—they caused much harm to Islam. Thus, are there any other means that help exempt Islam from this suspicion and gain acknowledgement from the West to preserve some significance or role in the near future? Neither I nor others have these necessary means. However, I want to benefit from the mistakes of the above-mentioned groups in determining the effective means to represent Islam in a good light. The mistake of the first group is that they presented to their interlocutors the values that they already had. Thus, I must present to them the values that they do not or may not have until they become convinced of the necessity to integrate them into their belief system. The mistake of the second group is that they presented to their interlocutors the valorous aspect of Islam. Thus, we have to show them the kindest, most lenient, and most flexible aspects of Islam, which they probably lack or can never have, until they feel some kind of spiritual serenity and reassurance.

We can preach about the necessity of these Islamic values only when we are certain that these values can correct the materialist values that the West proudly clings to. These corrective values are purely spiritual. Equally, we can make them feel reassured only when our dealing with them proves to be much better than their pragmatic treatment of us. This is a non-pragmatic treatment that can only be performed through purely moral-ethical treatment. Thus far, it has been proved that effective means of presenting Islam to others can only be through elucidating Islamic moral and spiritual values for which others cannot

find better substitutes. Therefore, they would find themselves obliged, in the context of the tyranny of their capitalist covetousness, to embrace these spiritual values to lessen the excesses of materialism. They would become aware then of their need to embrace our moral and spiritual power as much as we are in need of their materialist and scientific power.

In your book *Religious Practice and the Renewal of Reason*, you referred to your aim to establish and enrich the Islamic option. Is this in principle a call or a thesis that is responsive to current individual circumstances and civilisational concerns?

I initially intended in my book *Religious Practice and the Renewal of Reason* to free the Islamic option from the charges of fundamentalism and politicisation that the enemies of Islam ascribed to it. I was expecting this unfortunate accusation; that is why I focused in my book on two main components that are in principle free from fundamentalism and politicisation. They are the mental and moral components. I worked diligently to demonstrate that Islamic vigilance (*yaqza*) will not be powerful and successful if its leaders are not pre-equipped with an amount of science that outweighs what their opponents have.¹ They need to respond to their opponents' evidence with solid counter-evidence and counter their claims of rationalism, scientificity, and objectivity. The call for these values is replete with great confusion and great defects which the leaders of the Islamic option have to recognise so that they can tell when to use them and how to circumvent them. Islamic rationalism is not similar to the opponents' purely theoretical rationalism. It is a directed operation that can be promoted and enhanced and thus can become a living rationalism, which the investigators of the divine law (Sharia) support.

I have also explained that Islamic vigilance cannot be complete and mature if its leaders are not pre-equipped with a degree of morality or ethics (*akhlāq*) that outweighs the opponents' share of morality.² This way, they can become

1 Writers are used to referring to the Islamic revivalist movement, which the Islamic world witnessed during the last decade of the previous century, by the name *ṣaḥwa* (awakening); however, I prefer to use the word *yaqza* (vigilance) which is a more eloquent expression and semantically rich and steeped in the history of doctrinal practice. The preponderant meaning of the term awakening is derived from the Egyptian vernacular. The verb *ṣaḥā* (awake) in Arabic means sober up and clear the mind.

2 In Arabic, the equivalent of ethics is *akhlāq*; this is a plural form which highlights the concepts and norms of ethics. The singular form is *khuluq*; it is used when the personality and traits of a person are highlighted. Both ethics and morality are captured by *akhlāq* and *khuluq* in Arabic. However, ethics in English is specifically related to the branch of philosophy that

preachers their option through behavioural and practical examples and not just through verbal statements. This is true especially now that the propaganda discourse, whether it is a call to a right or wrong cause, has become too extravagant so that it is no longer as appealing to people as it was before. In contrast, it has been enforced through intensive preaching and soliciting.

The leaders of the Islamic option are in dire need of existing as living actors, and not dead speakers; that is, they should be real examples. If only they had paid as much attention to ethics as they had to politics, they could have gone further than the others because the Islamic religion is originally based on these morals and ethics. They could have gone further than anyone in making new theories and assuming new views about ethics. They could have become teachers, given the moral backwardness the world has witnessed and the general awareness of contemporary leading Western thinkers of the imperative to escape from this moral decay.

Unfortunately, this problem has been silenced or underestimated in Islamic vigilance. This is because others had transferred to these Islamic leaders a notion of ethics that is restricted to complementary and luxurious characteristics that are addressed only to the individual who is given the choice to adopt or discard them. This is a wrong understanding of ethics. Morality is the source of humans' humanity. The more morals human beings have the more humanity they enjoy. Living tradition, true culture, and proper civilisation are no more than a set of morals. More than that, all that is related to human beings, or any living organism, is subject to ethics. Reason is moral as long as it is based on truth; science is moral as long as it seeks the common good; religious practice is moral as long as it seeks righteousness; life is moral as long as it strives to protect the soul. Therefore, ethics are in reality the basic manners through which human existence is accomplished. True Muslims are required to pay full attention to the perfection of their humanity.

How do you interpret the prejudice of some Moroccan Islamists against your intellectual project in your valuable book *Renewing the Method to Assess Tradition, even though it constitutes a new and innovative means for the advancement of contemporary Islamic thought?*

You have mentioned that the most important aspect of my project in this book is circumventing the way both Western and Arab thinkers follow in assessing

systematises and commends right behaviour or denigrates wrong conduct, whereas morality is a code of conduct that is derived from a certain religion, culture, or philosophy. In this translation, ethics and morality are used interchangeably to refer to ethical codes of conducts.

the Arab-Islamic tradition. They have drawn on some methodological tools that are inherited from outside this tradition. Hence, I have opened a new way of assessment that draws on means that are inherited from this tradition itself. This does not mean at all that I am replacing the expedient modern means with useless old ones as my opponents claimed. I have observed the latest logical and cognitive requirements of scientific methodology to sort out these tradition-related means in all their types and stages. Since my means of assessing tradition were derived from the tradition itself by way of a modern methodology, their procedural values are much more advanced than the modern means that are imposed on the tradition from outside.

Moreover, the requisite coherence between the subject and the required means in every valid methodology can be achieved through internal tradition-related means, and never through externally imposed ones. It is quite certain that the latter means belong to a type of tradition that is not Arab or Islamic and were imposed on our tradition despite its distinctive character and aims.

As for the prejudice of some Moroccan Islamists against this innovating project in the course of tradition (though it serves Islamic thought in a way that even the most recent projects do not) I can ascribe them to a set of reasons that revolve around three types of differences. These types do not include the slightest psychological details that instigate the desire for difference or opposition.

The first reason is related to the connection between Islamic knowledge and logical methodology. There are some Moroccan Islamists who are still working according to the obsolete advisory opinion of Ibn al-Salāḥ in logic. To disparage this opinion, it is enough to state that it is not free from ulterior motives. It said that Ibn al-Salāḥ wanted to learn logic but his teacher, noticing his unreadiness, advised him to disregard this science and pursue another science. Why cannot one assume that he could not get over that humiliation? Indeed, the Islamic researcher does not need—in the context of vigilance (*yaqza*) that is witnessed in the Islamic arena—anything other than adopting the means of logical methodology in order to acquire the mental ability to face the major intellectual challenges which threaten his future. He should learn a lesson from previous Muslim scholars who were able to establish Islamic knowledge and face their opponents through their mastery of these logical means either by borrowing from others or inventing their own.

The proof for the veracity of what I am trying to say here is provided in the “Fundamentals of Islamic Jurisprudence” (*the science of uṣūl al-fiqh*). This is concerned with the logical methodology that the jurists follow in deriving their judgments and issuing their advisory opinions. This being the case about jur-

isprudence and its dependence on logic, one would wonder about the other sciences, be they legal or positivistic! They must be in sore need of equipping themselves with these logical means.

The second reason is related to the connection between religion and politicisation. Islamists commonly believe that religion and politicisation are inseparable in the belief that religion dominates all aspects of human life. Politics is at least one of its aspects; therefore, it should be incorporated into it. However, I think that their mistake is manifested in the fact that their views of politics and their ways of practising politics are not different from the views and practices of their non-Islamist opponents who argue for the separation between religion and politics. Indeed, politics that is related to religion can never be the same politics that is exercised in notorious councils, behind the scenes, and in dark vestibules. The simplest manifestation of this politics is calculation and bidding and the worst manifestation is machination and conspiracies.

Therefore, their opponents, with their claim of separation between religion and politics, tend to be more convincing since their arguments give the illusion that they are more respectful of religious truth than those who argue for no separation between religion and politics. It seems as if they exalt religion—the symbol of gracious morals—lest it should fall in the lower rank of politics, which seems to symbolise disadvantageous morals. Hence, there is only one (either/or) position to assume. The first one is to argue for the connection between religion and politics; then we ought to perceive politics the same way we perceive moral practice. The second is to argue for the separation; then we can practise politics according to its immoral basis. That is to say, the term politics refers to two opposing meanings. I have chosen to adopt the first argument and argue for the connection between politics and religion, which reflects my belief in the connection between religion and morality or ethics.

The third reason is related to the connection between religion and Sufism. Nothing offends the Islamists more than Sufism and Sufis to the extent that some of them would choose to be a hypocrite rather than a Sufi if they were obliged to make a choice. They believe that they are more rightly guided than the Sufis. This is extremely immoderate and excessive. I can only perceive religion in terms of Sufism; religion is in origin a kind of cleaving to morals, and Sufism is a term that refers to the search for perfection. The meaning of cleaving to morals, as I see it, is not limited to performing perfect actions with manifest effects. It is, instead, inclusive of all human actions, including organic and biological actions such as eating, drinking, and sleeping, let alone moral actions such as feeling, cognition, and knowledge.

Hence, the Greek traditional belief that the mind is the distinctive property of human beings is invalidated. I believe that ethics distinguish human beings

from other creatures. Cognitive action is indeed a moral action; the proof for this is that cognitive action is attributed to human beings only when its benefit is appreciated and its harm is depreciated. Both appreciation and depreciation are moral actions; therefore, the first philosophical question is neither “What is existence?”, as our forebears thought, nor “Who am I?” as their successors thought. It is, instead, “How to assume ethics?” or if you wish “How to be human?” Moralism (*akhlāqiyya*) and humanity, in my opinion, are two sides of the same coin. Salvation is the common bond between religion and Sufism. Is this reprehensible? Certainly not! Are not they both seeking human perfection?

How do you assess the fundamentalist movements?

Undoubtedly, there is a sweeping vigilance in the Islamic world. I referred to that in my book *Religious Practice and the Renewal of Reason* ten years ago. I explained clearly the necessary conditions for this vigilance not to relapse quickly and return to deep indolence. I defined some specific principles for this vigilance to meet the standards of this changing age, which are summarised in these two main supporting statements:

The first supporting statement is related to the perfection of spiritual power. Any movement that claims to adhere to a divine religion such as Islam has to seek this power vociferously. This will sustain the movement to acquire the legitimacy of being both distinguished from the other movements that have no religious background and being superior to the movements that oppose and shun religion. It should obtain a large share of spiritual power in order to attain the intended goal of this vigilance, which is the renewal of Muslims. If it does not attain this spiritual renewal, it will remain useless like the other irreligious movements.

The second supporting statement has to do with the perfection of cognitive power. Every movement, given its adherence to the non-human source, is prone (more than any other movement) to the charge of irrationalism. It has to prove its rationalism. It is not sufficient for this movement to seek publicly and explicitly this second power, but it must obtain a greater share of this power that outweighs the movement that has no divine source. This is attributed to the fact that its rationalism is objected to while the rationalism of the irreligious movement is acknowledged. Thus, it needs to both eliminate the objection and acquire the acknowledgement.

This Islamic vigilance happened to split into various currents, the most important of which is the fundamentalist one which was itself split into several fundamentalisms. Unfortunately, most of these fundamentalisms did not seek

to obtain the abovementioned two principles without which no progress can be made. They abandoned their search for the perfect spiritual power and looked forward to attaining political power. They preferred the prestige of authority to spiritual perfection. The proof of their inability to attain the necessary spiritual perfection to renew humankind is their failure to contribute to non-political fields, such as science, thought, ethics, sociology, philosophy, and art, as much as they contribute to what is purely political. However, the truth is that the spirit is capable of contributing to all fields, not only to the political field, once it is perfected. This is what I call in my aforementioned book the disease of Politicisation (*tasayyis*). Scholars in the Arabian East have become alerted to this disease owing to the ideas expressed in my book.

These fundamentalist movements abandoned their search for the perfection of mental power and sought to imitate the weakest methods connected to cognitive exercise, which has proved to lack a directed purpose that can serve Islamic practice. They preferred to prove their existence before their rationality. The proof of their inability to attain the necessary cognitive perfection to obtain recognition is their failure to innovate any distinct Islamic thought that is capable of competing with their non-Islamic counterparts. The truth is that when the mind is perfected, it becomes capable of innovating. This is what I call in my book the disease of Abstraction (*tajrīd*).

In sum, the existing fundamentalist movements yield some results that are closer to pure politics, which benefits only a certain group, than to the mental and spiritual Islamic practices that benefit all people. This Islamic practice meets the requirement of contributing to human civilisation and necessary productivity in the scientific field. I believe that this politicising tendency will not enable these movements to resume their claim of independence. Instead, they will be inclined to integrate into other non-religious movements. They can save themselves from this dissipation by performing a second vigilance that can remove them from subsidiary political practice and lead them back to the authentically spiritual and mental practice.

Globalisations

We do not have to feel afraid or sad because
globalisation perishes and humankind survives



We are entering the age of globalisation. Can we express our thought
freely?

I habitually and strongly decline to raise topics that others have exhausted; I feel that these topics are dictated and guided by those who are in charge of certain media channels. They intend to make the world engage in these topics for hidden and malicious agendas. Moreover, philosophers abhor being followers rather than leaders of thoughts. Hence, I will unreluctantly talk about globalisation (*‘awlama*). It seems to me that globalisation is not a new civilisational phenomenon or a distinctive aspect engendered and imposed by the exigencies of Western modernity. It is instead a civilisational phenomenon inherent in human history in its entirety; it has been passed around by the nations that have more or less directed this history. Whenever a great nation witnessed the spread of some civilisational hegemony, there existed a kind of globalisation, starting from the early Eastern civilisations to the latest Western ones.

Therefore, it seems to me that globalisation is not a result of the development of human history, that is, a trace of historical action. On the contrary, it is an action that is creating and moving history forward. It is possible to say that history is “globalising” (*yata‘awlam*). Globalism (*ta‘awlum*) is the action that allows civilisational history to come into existence. This stands in contradistinction to the common thought that civilisational history is the action that allows globalism to come into existence. This being the case, it becomes clear that globalism is a natural phenomenon that is as ancient as civilisational history. However, this does not mean that it takes one form every time. Instead, it has taken various forms throughout the long history of humanity. Globalism can be dominated by doctrinal, cultural, commercial, political, economic, or media forces; subsequently, it can be either followed by other forces or enter into the interconnection of these forces.

There are two main consequences of the above situation. Firstly, contemporary globalisation should not scare or terrify us more than the previous globalisations did their contemporaries in the ancient nations.

Secondly, globalisations are prone to perish when they lose their reason for existence; however, humankind survives and its reason for existence persists. This means that no kind of globalising (*ta'awlum*) could in the past eliminate humankind. Thus, contemporary globalism will not be able to efface humankind because in every age globalism finds its suitable people who draw on its benefits and avoid its drawbacks.

It seems that the main aspect of the historical globalism that we are witnessing nowadays is the interconnection between the economic and media forces that follow from the political and cultural forces. On the basis of the two previous outcomes, we need to look at contemporary globalism as being similar to its antecedent globalisms. Thus, we should not exaggerate its intimidating prospects to the extent of imagining it as the end of humankind, if not the end of history. Those who are obsessed with these intimidating prospects are influenced by philosophers, such as Hegel, who inculcated in their minds these Christian-originated concepts. This intimidating globalism will disappear like its previous antecedents. Human beings will survive and persist thanks to two main reasons:

For the first reason, the nature of human beings is not what modern globalism tends to maintain. Globalism tends to consider human beings as a sort of "system of facts and means". Every system of this sort is known to be attributed to a set of natural movements which are governed in their entirety by a group of fixed laws. That is, it is an automated system. Thus, human beings become at the end of the analysis a mere machine. This is not, however, the case. Human beings were and are still a group of values and intentions. Any similar groups of this sort cannot be natural movements that are governed by a set of laws. That is to say, they are moral-ethical groups. Hence, human beings are in essence a sort of marvel, or if you wish, human beings are a marvel before they were a machine.

Concerning the second reason, contemporary globalism, which is sweeping human history, is not what it intends to be. That is, globalism intends normally to stand as a path for events; it seeks to be firmly controlled and carefully guided. In other words, history is seen as a faithful construct. This is of course not true. History is subject to seduction. That is, events do not flow according to a fixed and intended plan; it is subject also to deception when the outcome of controlled events leads to the opposite of what was intended. That is, history is an unfaithful construct.

That being said, it seems that our integration into contemporary globalism is not to be feared. Indeed, we are already integrated into it whether we like

it or not. Or at least, we have started both consciously and unconsciously to integrate into it because human beings have a visible swaying control of this globalism. This appears in two ways. On the one hand, human beings can come up with worthwhile values that can oppose the detrimental values brought about by this globalism. This is because human beings are in essence a marvel and they do not turn into a machine in any of their actions. On the other hand, globalism can stumble and lose control of its course; thus, its purposes and plans can turn upside down because it is, in essence, prone to lose faith in its creation. Its creation cannot be seen as faithful; therefore, contemporary human beings are much stronger than the new globalisation in that they can protect themselves from its harms and even help it overcome its failings.

Therefore, I am completely convinced that human intellect will be as valuable as economic affairs in the new globalism. This is not because this globalisation will reserve for intellect a status that is as eminent as the status of the economy. Human beings are capable of earning this status thanks to their ability to innovate values that are stronger than the ones that globalisation creates. They neither become weaker nor stumble where it stumbles.

This being the case, Arab thinkers should not surrender or give in to pessimism on the excuse that the media economic giant connected to new globalism is the absolute master, and the media economic midget represented by the Arabs can only be the absolute slave. They should be aware of the nature of their new obligations in the context of this new globalism; they should be conscious of the human being that resides inside each of them. Therefore, Arab thinkers can come up with values that are more esteemed than the values of this economic giant which can also stumble, and they can be credited for bringing it back to life.

As for the first obligation, thinkers should know that they have duties toward one another; they should not break their relationships and close all channels of communication. They should not, out of resentment, conspire against each other; they should not, out of envy, claim what does not belong to them; they should not, out of weakness, usurp the leadership role assumed by others; they should not abandon one another in time of misfortune. Instead, they should strengthen their bonds and be the first to recognise each other's contributions and support one another when facing oppression. They should collaborate in better orienting their intellectual trajectory, maintaining the position of their nation, and guaranteeing its efficient adherence to the new world. All this signals the need for creating different forms of associations and unions within which these Arab thinkers can affiliate themselves. This is added to the imperative of establishing effective secretaries, directors, committees, and boards to coordinate the various activities aimed at bringing them together in spite of

their different choices and orientations. This is supposed to ignite their rational thinking, reinvigorate their ideas, and ultimately create a new Arab human qualified for the new globalism, which can happen by directing his paths and reforming his defects.

Moreover, I do estimate that the leading role of the Arab thinker in the new world order will be much more important than the role of politicians. This is because political practice will be dictated by the decisions of the economic giant. Even the Arab rulers will be required to execute the instructions and orders authoritatively imposed on them. The only saviour from this crushing dependency, or at least the one who can disrupt this situation, is the thinker.

Therefore, it is not surprising that some scholars would claim that the next human conflict will be a purely cultural conflict. As the global economy is becoming interconnected, metaphorically constituting eternal oneness, intellect and thought are the only remaining areas where freedom, difference, and disagreement can be practised. As such, the Arab thinker is obligated to prepare his intellectual difference, establish its basis, and build its method to secure a distinguished contribution for this nation in the upcoming intellectual battlefield.

There are growing voices in the West revealing the end of the time of philosophy (with the end of ideology) and even the end of history. This coincides with the sweeping expansion of globalisation. Do you think that philosophy in our modern Arab cultural and intellectual circles has a different significance than its counterpart in the contemporary West?

There is a very regrettable truth that applies to our progressive and modernist thinkers. They do not regret or blame themselves for the ideas they have abandoned after having staunchly defended and disseminated them among their people, or the ideas they have re-adopted after having abandoned and persuaded their people to quit them. For example, there are many philosophers in our Arab nations who initially based their thought on the principles of "Marxism". They could not imagine another alternative to it. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, owing to internal historical logic or external political conspiracy, these philosophers turned to deriving their ideas from the principles of "liberalism," and eventually called for the principles of globalisation, without any feeling of remorse or self-blame for their change of thought. They did not even expect any of their people to censure them. Worse than that, when they were writing in the past, they called for that thought and urged their people to see it as the only complete thought.

The parties that opposed these thinkers were treated harshly especially if the thinkers had been supported by major media outlets that helped disseminate their thoughts and illusions, or if they had adhered to a certain association they represented intellectually to eschew its fanatically hostile response. The way they are now standing for liberalism and globalisation is similar to their defence of the principles of Marxism and communism in the past; that is, it is a case of emulation with no sense of culpability.

A nation where thinkers are not held accountable for what they have said, even when their words are proven to cause more harm, will sooner or later be destined to disappear. Like freedom of action, freedom of speech should be subjected to both the same strict regulations that are meant to guide conduct, and to the same useful results that are followed by rewards. Otherwise, it will have an evil consequence on a nation like that of the Arabs that is trying to overcome various setbacks. This Arab nation cannot support further stumbles and losses.

Our critique would be fruitful if we embarked on criticising ourselves for the mistakes we committed while we were, so we believed, doing the right things. These mistakes are ascribed to our hasty imitation of Western philosophers who have drawn on conditions, which to us are either non-existent or unknown, to build their ideas. This critique will be deep and comprehensive, a pathway for a kind of philosophising that is not found among those philosophers. That is to say, this critique will be the fruit of contemplation of our mistakes that resulted from the blind imitation of others. By contrast, Western philosophers did not imitate anyone. They did not make those wrong turns in their career; thus, this kind of contemplation is probably unknown to them. Unfortunately, our thinkers have not even made this critique of the disadvantages of imitation, owing to their failure to grasp the minute details of the means they were copying. On the contrary, they have worked on a reverse critique; that is, they have embarked on criticising the non-imitation of the West. This indicates the unimaginable loss the Arab philosopher has had to endure.

Positing that modern Arab philosophical efforts are a mere imitation of and dependency on Western philosophical thought, what are in your assessment the required conditions to do away with this imitation and embark on renewing our Arab and Islamic realities, which have been for a long time subject to dependency and pressures of the dominant Western powers?

Our authors and scholars have up to now only criticised our old intellectual tradition; they disconnect themselves from it, charge its followers with various

fallacies, and disperse some of its parts. They should have instead criticised the messy and crooked ways they have used in this critique, which is mostly taken from others through imitation and analogy rather than through deduction and jurisprudence. Their call for renewing the tradition is a call for imitating Western thought and scholars. This call is surely blessed by the dominant powers through their support and sponsorship, especially when one knows that these powers have decided to maintain only one model of the world and one order of ruling. This is akin to building one house owned only by one person.

Obviously, such unfair decisions taken by the dominant powers throughout the long history of human existence on earth are the worst and most uninformed decisions, which have reached the summit of deviation. The uninformed side of this decision appears in the tendency of its supporters to imagine human beings as mere controlled and soulless machines; they imagine history as a controlled action that is free from mischief and deceit. The worst side of this decision appears in their tendency to impoverish human beings in a way unprecedented in history, viewing people as copies of one model. They often refer to this anomalous decision by the term globalisation to make it appealing.

However, it has a different nature which may be metaphorically referred to as “packaging” (*awlaba*) if we are allowed to use this term, which means that human beings would become a mere commodity that is packaged in one mould. Therefore, our thinkers who are calling for imitation are indeed contributing, consciously or not, to creating these poor, if not the most impoverished, human beings.

The call for true renewal is purported to enrich Arabs and Muslims rather than impoverish them. The best way to achieve this is by shunning imitation of the ideas, beliefs, and thoughts of the creators of the aforementioned decision until we gather sufficient evidence for the validity of their thought. We can abandon this imitation when we become able, in our dealing with one another and with others, to distinguish between two issues: the issue of means and events; and the issue of objectives and values. The events and means should be external and objective in principle unless countered by different evidence. The objectives and values should be internal and subjective in principle unless countered by different evidence.

Normally, the specificities of nations are determined in theory by their objectives and values. The events and means can be, more or less, shared by all nations; they can borrow from one another. They can offer some of them to one other. The possession of these means by one nation does not at all mean their eternal appropriation. It rather means that the nation is preoccupied with

them for some time; then they will be transferred to another nation following the law of transaction between nations.

This being the case, we need to define the group of objectives and values that should describe our specificity. These objectives and values normally direct our history and establish our transactions. If we succeed in defining these objectives and values, we will be able, henceforth, to draw on them in our use of the means and in our encounter with the events (these means could be either ours or borrowed from others; the events are either caused by us or by others). This is because we would have already oriented them by our objectives and couched them in our values. Therefore, if they do not contribute to our richness and freedom, they will never harm our discursive and historical specificity.

All this suggests that the right call for renewal tends to look at Arab and Muslim human beings not as a machine—a system that is devoid of the means and events. It should instead look at them as a marvel and proof—a group of living objectives and values. A call like this is capable of resolutely standing against the agenda of “packaging” that is programmed for the people of the world. I do not have any doubt that contemporary thinkers—those who have living hearts—of our nation, although a small minority that is aware of their intellectual responsibilities in initiating the fundamentals of Arab-Islamic cognitive innovation, are performing their militant responsibility. They are facing the challenges of suppression and effacement as endured by their nations and as perpetuated by their oppressive enemies as well as neglectful fellow humans. These militant thinkers are dispirited by the gravity of pressures, the fabrication of charges, or the temptation of greed.

A Biographical Timeline of Taha Abderrahmane

- He pursued his higher education in both Morocco and France.
- He obtained his first Doctorate (third cycle) from The Sorbonne in 1972. The title of his dissertation is *Langage et philosophie: essai sur les structures linguistiques de l'ontologie* (*Language and Philosophy: Essays on the Ontology of Language Structure*). He then obtained his second cycle Ph.D. from the same university in 1985. The title of the dissertation is *Essai sur les logiques des raisonnements argumentatifs et naturels* (*Essays on the Logic of Argumentative and Natural Reasonings*).
- Professor of logic and the philosophy of language at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Mohammed v University, Rabat since 1970.
- A visiting scholar at Āl al-Bayt University, Jordan, Amman.
- A visiting scholar at The University of Sfax, Tunisia.
- A founding member of the Moroccan Writers Union.
- A representative member of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation in Morocco, which is located in Amsterdam, Holland.
- A representative member of the Society of Philosophy and Intercultural Communication, which is located in Cologne, Germany.
- A member of the higher council of the Society of the Global Islamic Call “al-Da‘wa al-Islāmiya” in Libya.
- Vice-president of the Society of Arabic Philosophy, which is located in Amman, Jordan.
- Vice-editor of the Journal of Debate *al-Munāẓara*, which specialises in analysing concepts and methods.
- Editor of many Journals: Islamic University, London; *al-Nibrās* (Light) Journal, Jordan; Renewal Journal, Malaysia; Philosophical Studies Journal, Iraq; Arab Journal of Human Sciences, Kuwait.
- Expert in the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco.
- A winner of the prestigious Moroccan Prize in Human Sciences in 1977 for his book *Fī uṣūl al-ḥiwār wa-tajdīd ‘ilm al-kalām* (*On the Fundamentals of Dialogue and Renovation of Islamic Theology*).
- A winner of the prestigious Moroccan Prize in Human Sciences in 1995 for his book *Tajdīd al-manhaj fī taqwīm al-turāth* (*Renewing the Method to Assess Tradition*).
- He has taken part in many national, Arab, and international scientific conferences.

- He has written extensively on logic, philosophy, linguistics, and Islamic thought in Arabic, French, and English.

A Bibliographical Note on Taha Abderrahmane

Among his books on the methods of logic:

1. *Al-Manṭiq wa-l-naḥw al-ṣūrī* (*Formal Logic and Grammar*), 1983.
2. *Fī uṣūl al-ḥiwār wa-tajdīd ‘ilm al-kalām* (*On the Fundamentals of Dialogue and Renovation of Islamic Theology*), 1987.
3. *Tajdīd al-manhaj fī taqwīm al-turāth* (*Renewing the Method to Assess Tradition*), 1994.
4. *Al-Lisān wa-l-mīzān aw al-takawthur al-‘aqlī* (*Language and Balance, or the Multiplication of Reason*), 1998.
5. *Dialogues for the Future* (this book).

Among his books on the philosophy of language:

6. *Language and Philosophy* (originally in French), 1977.
7. *Fiqh al-falsafa, 1: al-Falsafa wa-l-tarjama* (*Understanding Philosophy, Vol. 1: Philosophy and Translation*), 1995.
8. *Fiqh al-Falsafa, 2: al-Qawl al-falsafī—Kitāb al-mafhūm wa-l-ta’thīl* (*Understanding Philosophy, Vol. II: On Philosophical Discourse—The Book of Concept and Etymology*), 1999.

Among his books on the philosophy of ethics:

9. *Al-‘Amal al-dīnī wa-tajdīd al-‘aql* (*Religious Practice and the Renewal of Reason*).
10. *Su‘āl al-akhlāq: Musāhama fī al-naqd al-akhlāqī li-l-ḥadātha al-gharbiyya* (*The Question of Ethics—A Contribution to Ethical Criticism of Western Modernity*).

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Dialogues for the Future provides a sneak peek at the long philosophic journey of the renowned Arab scholar Taha Abderrahmane. The author looks at different thorny issues such as traditions, philosophy, ethics, globalization, and logic through a local prism that is not directedly tainted by the Western epistemic and ontological worldview. While seemingly addressing audiences with a background in the philosophy of language and Islamic philosophy, Taha's intellectual project tackles many questions that wider readerships might have about the Muslims' and Arabs' contribution to knowledge in the past and present. The translator's introduction "on Dialogue, Ethics and Traditions" contextualizes Taha's book within the plethora of his academic work, allowing English-speaking readers to engage with the open canvas of dialogue Taha has resiliently initiated.

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