History Politicizes Sensual Metaphysics

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Unfabling the East: The Enlightenment's Encounter with Asia by Jürgen Osterhammel, translated by Robert Savage [Princeton University Press, 9780691172729]

How Enlightenment Europe rediscovered its identity by measuring itself against the great civilizations of Asia

During the long eighteenth century, Europe's travelers, scholars, and intellectuals looked to Asia

in a spirit of puzzlement, irony, and openness. In this panoramic and colorful book, Jürgen Osterhammel tells the story of the European Enlightenment's nuanced encounter with the great civilizations of the East, from the Ottoman Empire and India to China and Japan.

Here is the acclaimed book that challenges the notion that Europe's formative engagement with the non-European world was invariably marred by an imperial gaze and presumptions of Western superiority. Osterhammel shows how major figures such as Leibniz, Voltaire, Gibbon, and Hegel took a keen interest in Asian culture and history, and introduces lesser-known scientific travelers, colonial administrators, Jesuit missionaries, and adventurers who returned home from Asia bearing manuscripts in many exotic languages, huge collections of ethnographic data, and stories that sometimes defied belief. Osterhammel brings the sights and sounds of this tumultuous age vividly to life, from the salons of Paris and the lecture halls of Edinburgh to the deserts of Arabia, the steppes of Siberia, and the sumptuous courts of Asian princes. He demonstrates how Europe discovered its own identity anew by measuring itself against its more senior continent, and how it was only toward the end of this period that cruder forms of Eurocentrism--and condescension toward Asia—prevailed.

A momentous work by one of Europe's most eminent historians, Unfabling the East takes readers on a thrilling voyage to the farthest shores, bringing back vital insights for our own multicultural age.

Excerpt: The long eighteenth century, lasting from around 1680 to the 1820s, was a period of intensive European engagement with Asia. This engagement was partly colonial—in South Asia, on Java and the Philippines, in the Russian Empire from the Black Sea to the vast expanses of Siberia. Other regions of the continent were barely touched by European imperial ambitions: the Ottoman Empire, Persia, Afghanistan, China, Japan, and the greater part of Southeast Asia. Whether colonized or not, a steady stream of European adventurers, scholars, explorers, diplomats, soldiers, traders, and priests crisscrossed the continent, reporting back on what they saw to an interested public.

Their writings, often translated into several languages and disseminated across the continent and also to the Americas, laid the foundation for some of the era's most important works of philosophy, social theory, and history. The "big names" and armchair travelers who never left Europe referred to Asia extensively, making it a touchstone for their wide-ranging theories. Asia may have been Europe's "Other," but it figured as a permanent intellectual challenge rather than as an entirely alien and incomprehensible world. Montesquieu, Voltaire, or Turgot in France; Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, or Thomas Robert Malthus in Great Britain; Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Johann Gottfried Herder, or Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in Germany; last but not least the great historian Edward Gibbon in his self-imposed exile at Lausanne—they all grappled with the broad variety of Asia's societies and civilizations, with its past, present, and future. Together with philosophically-minded travelers on the ground—Engelbert Kaempfer in Japan, John Chardin in Persia, the Jesuits in China, Carsten Niebuhr in Arabia, Sir Stamford Raffles in Java, and many others—they formed a single and seamless class of physically and mentally mobile intellectuals, a classe curieuse.

I draw on this large body of travel literature and theoretical comment to challenge the conventional postcolonial wisdom that sees all attempts to understand "the East," including those of an era "before empire," as invariably imperialistic and contaminated by European fantasies of power. On the other hand, the book is no partisan and one-dimensional apology of an Enlightenment whose ambiguities and "dialectic"—see Theodor W. Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's famous book Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947)—have been revealed by numerous earlier critics. The main argument of my book is that the Enlightenment's discovery of Asia entailed a more open-minded, less patronizing approach to foreign cultures than suggested by those who see it as a mere incubation period of Orientalism. I also discuss how Enlightenment cosmopolitanism came to be replaced by the aggressive colonialism and sense of superiority so prevalent in the nineteenth century. The end result was a mental "great divergence" in Eurasia that has narrowed again only in our own time. Asia was left an object of scientific inquiry while it disappeared from public debates in the many fields where it had played such an enormous role before: political theory, economics, the philosophy of history, or emergent comparative social science. This development can be conceptualized as a passage from "inclusive" to "exclusive" Eurocentrism.

This book has an unusual history, and readers may want to know a little about it before they decide to spend time on the chapters that follow. It was first published in German in 1998 as Die Entzauberung Asiens: Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18. Jahrhundert; a second edition of 2010 added a postscript commenting on more recent literature. How the English title Unfabling the East came about will be explained at the end of chapter 1. Most of the library research for the book was done in the mid-1980s in dim rare book collections and in front of uncomfortable microfiche readers, in other words, at a time when the prospect of having a profusion of sources available at the click of a mouse was beyond one's wildest imagination. After a long interval caused by other professional commitments, I wrote the bulk of the manuscript in 1996-97 while I had the privilege of spending ten

months as a fellow at that pinnacle of the German academic system, the Wissenschaftskolleg (Institute for Advanced Studies) in Berlin. It is a pleasure to renew my thanks to that splendid institution, in particular to its rector at the time, Wolf Lepenies, and to the current rector, Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger. The Wissenschaftskolleg in 2001 also graced the book with its own Anna-Krüger-Preis given to publications that bridge the gap between the world of experts and an educated lay public.

For those readers who are familiar with German academia I should add that the book is not one of the two academic theses that are still required in Germany of budding scholars in the humanities; it is no Habilitationsschrift. This proved to be a great advantage. While the book aims at meeting high academic standards it was never constrained by the formal conventions of a research monograph. At the same time, no publisher's commission stood at the beginning of the project. I did not write with a specific "market" in mind and could safely ignore deadlines and even word counts. Thus, I enjoyed the freedom to realize my intentions to the fullest extent. This would have been impossible without the understanding and generosity of my German publishers, C. H. Beck at Munich, a distinguished family firm that has succeeded in carrying over a great tradition of publishing into modern times and provides its authors with an intellectual home.

These intentions also imply limitations that I imposed on myself. Though it should become obvious upon casual acquaintance with the book that it does not aim at encyclopedic completeness, readers may miss chapters on two classical topics: religion and language. These omissions are deliberate. The question of Western views of Asian languages demands a specialized knowledge that I would never have been able to acquire within reasonable time, while religion is such a vast and well-researched topic that there would have been little more to do than summarize the existing literature. Splendid new works such as Urs App's The Birth of Orientalism (2010) will satisfy the curious. I also felt that I had nothing original to add to the extended debate about the emergence of racism in the eighteenth century.

The present American edition is a thoroughly revised version of the German original. I went through the text and redrafted numerous passages. Any reference to books and articles published in 1997 or later points to material newly consulted. In the meantime, the works by some of my protagonists came out in excellent new editions: Leibniz (his correspondence with the Jesuits in China), Montesquieu, Voltaire, Engelbert Kaempfer, Edmund Burke, George Bogle, Alexander von Humboldt, and others. Long-awaited biographies of and monographs on a few central characters appeared in print: Lawrence Baack on Carsten Niebuhr, Michael Franklin on Sir William Jones, Isobel Grundy on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, or Richard Bourke on Edmund Burke. J.G.A. Pocock's six volumes on Edward Gibbon and his contemporaries, one of the great achievements of the humanities in our time, were not yet available when I wrote the book more than twenty years ago. They have proved a constant source of inspiration. The same is true for Karl S. Guthke's wide-ranging studies of German cosmopolitanism in Goethe's Weimar as well as for Sanjay Subrahmanyam's series of profound writings on the European-Asian encounter, though they focus on an earlier period and put a stronger emphasis on real-life connections than I do in this book.

Given that this book aims to resurrect a corpus of Enlightenment travel literature and geographical commentary that is rarely consulted today, it will come as no surprise that extensive use has been made of quotations from primary sources. In the case of works in foreign languages, the original wording has sometimes been included in the notes where the expression is especially felicitous, or where the author employs specific terms that informed readers may wish to access for themselves. Where possible, such sources are quoted in the main text from the earliest existing translations into English, which often preserve something of the original's period flavor. Slight modifications have occasionally been made and duly noted. The abbreviation if has been used to indicate that the reference continues over more than two pages.

Excerpt:

Looking to the East

> The people of our western hemisphere, in all these discoveries, gave proofs of a great superiority of genius and courage over the eastern nations. We have settled ourselves amongst them, and frequently in spite of their resistance. We have learned their languages, and have taught them some of our arts; but nature hath given them one advantage which overbalances all ours; which is, that they do not want us, but we them. —Voltaire (1694-1778), Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations et sur les principaux faits de l'histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à Louis XIII

In the first quarter of the twenty-first century, the world is taking back many of the outcomes of the nineteenth. The nineteenth century witnessed the culmination of a historically unparalleled process by which Europeans came to assert their dominance over four continents. One of the consequences was an attitude of arrogant condescension towards all civilizations that had given proof of their deficiency, if not terminal debility, through the ease with which they had been militarily overpowered, economically exploited, and technologically outstripped. The "West"—the European great powers, Britain at the fore, together with a United States of America that increasingly hankered after an empire of its own—savored its triumph over Asia, in particular. It had long been taken for granted that indigenous Americans, black Africans, and the natives of Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific islands could be subdued, dispossessed, colonized, and if necessary slaughtered in great numbers. Ever since Europeans had first learned of their existence, a sense of their own superiority to these "savages" (as they had been called since ancient times) had gone almost unquestioned.

Asia, by contrast, had always been the great counterweight to Europe, a world of mighty empires and prosperous societies, glorious cultural achievements and venerable religions. For thousands of years, the Eurasian continent had formed a single interconnected field. The emergence and spread of agriculture had already been a process of pan-Eurasian diffusion. Time and again, Asiatic peoples had intervened in the history

of the lands surrounding the Mediterranean and to the north of it, assimilating the vast spaces of Russia into their equestrian empires. Although Asia Minor and the Levant had been incorporated into the Imperium Romanum, the norm until well into the early modern period was for Europe to be threatened by Asia, not the other way around. Parthians, Huns, Arabs, Mongols, and Turks had all attacked the Western and Eastern Roman Empires and their various successor states, in some cases maintaining political control over previously Christianized regions for many centuries. Even Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, a vigilant and sober observer of contemporary world politics, feared a renewed Mongol onslaught, perhaps recalling Crimean Tatar raids on Transylvania and Moravia between 1657 and 1666. "And if these Tatars were not constantly fighting each other," he wrote in a letter in April 1699, "they might be able to inundate large parts of the world, just as they once did under Genghis Khan."

Asia's "Decline"—Europe's Arrogance

Compared with Leibniz's sincere concerns, which admittedly were grossly exaggerated even at the time, the warnings of late nineteenth-century authors about an alleged "yellow peril" were little more than fearmongering propaganda. By then, Asia's political power seemed to have been broken once and for all, its cultural prestige reduced to a shadow of its former glory. Around 1900, at the zenith of high imperialism, most of Asia was under European colonial rule. Only the boldest of prophets would have predicted an end to this dispensation. Although semi-colonial states like China, Siam (later Thailand), or the Ottoman Empire had managed to preserve their territorial integrity, their sovereignty had been drastically curtailed. Only Japan had succeeded through a tremendous effort of will, and under the most favorable external conditions imaginable, in transforming itself from a victim of the European powers and the USA into their junior partner, modernizing at breakneck speed. Everywhere else in Asia, the economic forms of European capitalism had triumphed, predominantly under the aegis of foreigners; only in rare cases had they been appropriated by native forces. All Asia seemed to have lost the historical initiative and been left far

behind in the race to modernize. It was no zealous advocate of imperialism but the levelheaded Austrian economist Friedricht von Wieser, who in 1909 gave voice to the general European verdict:

> Asia, the cradle of the human race, is buried under the rubble of enfeebled, degraded nations, which are no longer capable of grasping the opportunities for growth offered them by the technical advances of the age.
> In short, history seemed to have passed by Asia and the Asians.

Hardly anyone in Europe would have dared or cared to contest this verdict in the years leading up to the First World War, and few did so in the following decades. A first sign of renewed vitality at Europe's gates was Kemal Atatürk's energetic and successful modernization policy in Turkey, initiated in 1923. Yet it was not until the 1940s that Asia was able to wrest back its historical agency in the eyes of the world: with the Japanese attack on the American Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor in December 1941 and the surrender of the supposedly impregnable British fortress of Singapore barely two months later, with the Vietnamese revolution in 1945 and the Chinese in 1949, and with the independence of the Philippines, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma, and Indonesia between 1946 and 1949.

During the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in its final quarter, the causes and occasions for European arrogance towards Asia vanished in the face of the extraordinarily dynamic economic growth experienced by several of the continent's regions. For all those millions elsewhere who continued to languish in poverty, a majority of citizens of those economic powerhouses were now able to enjoy decent standards of living. The last rearguard argument used to defend European exceptionalism—Asians were capable merely of imitating the achievements of others, not of creative achievement in their own right—forfeited whatever credibility it might once have possessed. On the Asian side, there emerged an indigenous cultural nationalism that self-consciously rejected Western tutelage, asserted its own "Asian values," repudiated all forms of "cultural imperialism," and even turned on its head the old European cliché of

Asia's terminal decadence by prophesying a decline of the West. After the Iranian revolution of 1979, this ideological campaign became a factor of global political importance. In the early 1990s, and in more subdued tones following the great Asian economic crisis of 1997, voices from Japan and China, from Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea could be heard proclaiming the superiority of their own cultural values and social institutions over those of the West. Western warnings about Islamist aggression and a "new yellow peril" were seen to be confirmed, and alarmist visions of an imminent "clash of civilizations" were not lacking.

In the early twenty-first century, precious little thus remains of fin de siècle European hubris. Today it is impossible for Europe to recover its global supremacy, its unchallenged control over processes of economic globalization, and its pretensions to cultural superiority. If the nineteenth century belonged to Europe and the twentieth to the USA, many pundits of today are heralding the twenty-first as the Asian century. The time is ripe for historians to inquire into the origins of European exceptionalism, a vision of the world that for so long, and with such powerful repercussions, asserted European primacy over all other civilizations. This vision drew on ancient and Christian antecedents before crystallizing, in the Age of Enlightenment, into a secular worldview that dispensed with the religious belief in divine election. In the nineteenth century, increasingly discolored by racism, it dictated how Europeans presented themselves abroad before subsiding, in the era of decolonization, into an attitude of smug intellectual condescension.

Returning to the era of its formation, the eighteenth century, does not just mean trawling through the archives to illustrate an argument about the rise and fall of a historical discourse—in this case, that of European exceptionalism—and thus adding to the sometimes overdrawn, denunciatory critiques of European hypocrisies, illusions, and officially sanctioned delusions that have flourished ever since the publication in 1978 of Edward W. Said's highly influential polemic, Orientalism. It also means exploring a cultural world that no single thesis can exhaust: the world of European interest in Asia in the Age of Enlightenment.

The Great Map of Mankind

The European intellectual climate in the Age of Enlightenment was cosmopolitan in outlook, even when individual writers did not explicitly subscribe to a cosmopolitan agenda or philosophy.' National borders played a less important role than in earlier and, especially, later periods. The eighteenth-century republic of letters was multilingual. Latin was no longer predominant yet was still widely understood. Densely woven networks of communication, maintained through correspondence, visits, and foreign employment, connected savants in Paris and Edinburgh, London and Saint Petersburg, Uppsala and Göttingen, Leiden and Turin. Leibniz and Voltaire sought out like-minded contacts in far-off civilizations who could help them in their great project of adding to the store of knowledge about the world. For a time the Chinese mandarins, a meritocratic elite, seemed ideal interlocutors. Enlightenment was conceived as a universal enterprise.

It has become clearer today than even a few decades ago that this enterprise was equally a polycentric one. The peripheries of Europe did not just reflect the light beamed out from Paris and a handful of other metropolises; "epicenters of reason" were scattered throughout the continent. The British colonies in North America assume central importance in a global view of Enlightenment. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison were among the key philosophes of the age. Impulses emanating from Europe were taken up and creatively reworked in Lima, Calcutta, Batavia, and Cape Town. In the 1780s the Asiatick Society of Bengal, steered by the brilliant jurist, linguist, and homme de lettres Sir William Jones, formed one of the most dynamic clusters of transcultural scholarship found anywhere in the world at the time." The Jesuit mis¬sionaries at the imperial court of China, some of whom stayed on after the suppression of their order in Europe in the 1760s, remained what their predecessors had already been in Leibniz's day: valued epistolary partners for the leading European intellectuals.

Through such channels, which in many respects anticipate the dense networks of our own time, knowledge about political and social conditions, mores, customs, and religions in the non-European world was imported into Europe. Like other forms of knowledge, it underwent the procedures identified by Peter Burke: professing, establishing, locating, classifying, controlling, selling, acquiring, trusting, distrusting. In Europe, knowledge about Asia was classified, evaluated, and archived; foreign objects were itemized, catalogued, and put on display. Botany and zoology benefited from the specimens yielded by expeditions and colonial collections. The variety of species in nature was literally and figuratively first brought home to Europeans with increasing knowledge of the tropics; indigenous taxonomies flowed into many of the systems that European scientists now set about developing. Eighteenth-century intellectuals and scholars processed a constant flow of data from all around the world. Knowledge cultures cross-fertilized over vast distances. The European Enlightenment opened outwards to the rest of the world and in turn had an impact far beyond the boundaries of continental Europe.

The interest of an educated public in reports from Asia, America, the Pacific, and Africa was stronger than ever before. It was met by a veritable flood of travel literature. The standard travel works of the time crowded the shelves of almost every scholarly library and princely collection. Thanks to the Jesuits, some even made it as far as China. Towards the end of the era, the enormous private library of the Berlin geographer Carl Ritter contained almost the complete European-language literature on the world beyond Europe's borders." Public interest in events in the Ottoman Empire, for example, was so great that in 1789 the geographer Johann Traugott Plant brought out a weighty lexicon on Turkey for the edification of information-hungry newspaper readers. The horizon of the generation that began to write and publish in the mid-eighteenth century spanned the entire globe. This was without precedent in European intellectual history. In 1777 the parliamentarian, political philosopher, and—as we will see—morally concerned commentator on India, Edmund Burke, wrote to William Robinson to

convey his grateful "pleasure" on reading his History of America, one of the historiographical masterpieces of the epoch:

> The part which I read with the greatest pleasure is the discussion of the Manners and character of the Inhabitants of that new World. I have always thought with you, that we possess at this time very great advantages towards the knowledge of human Nature. We need no longer to go to History to trace it in all its stages and periods... But now the Great Map of Mankind is unrolld at once; and there is no state or Gradation of barbarism, and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same instant under our View. The very different Civility of Europe and of China; The barbarism of Persia and Abyssinia. The erratick manners of Tartary, and of Arabia. The Savage State of North America, and of New Zealand.

Writing at the same time in a similar vein, Jean-Nicolas Démeunier formulated the following Rousseauian sentence in the introduction to his superb ethnographic encyclopedia, a work that systematically collated knowledge about the customs and rites of every nation scattered on the face of the Earth: "We know nearly all the nations, civilized [policées] and savage; now the time has come to compare them." And the Scottish social philosopher Adam Ferguson was able to draw on material from all epochs and cultures when preparing his treatise on universal sociology, first published in 1767. "Late discoveries," he declared even before he could profit from Captain Cook's voyages in the Pacific, "have brought us to the knowledge of almost every situation in which mankind are placed."

At the time he wrote this, the East had long been present in more than just images and texts. Europeans could hardly bear to go without spices from the "East Indies'; they clothed themselves in Indian cotton and Chinese silk; they drank Arabian coffee and sipped Chinese tea. Opium from Turkey and India stimulated the artificial paradises of romantic literature and became, at least in England, a mass-market drug. In the eighteenth century Asia was a tangible, consumable presence in European everyday life. We have all seen

porcelain from China, the author of a popular history of Asia addressed his readers in 1735, so why should we not study the country's history as well? At the same time, the potential for the high-performing economies of the East to threaten their Western rivals did not go unheeded. Around 1700, competition from China was already giving French producers headaches.

Between around 1750 and 1820 it seemed far more self-evident than at any time before, and indeed at any time since, that the scholarly and educated public in France and Great Britain, Germany and Italy should keep abreast of conditions and developments overseas. It was not primarily on account of its entertainment value that news from foreign lands was consumed so avidly. Along with the classics of the ancient world and the Bible (commonly read as a work of history), it served as raw material for an empirical science of humankind. This science de l'homme was supranational, transcultural, and—as Burke and Démeunier indicated—comparative in scope; authors from the most diverse scientific disciplines and from all over Europe contributed to it. Pierre Bayle, the first Enlightenment author of genuinely European stature, had already sought out examples of human behavior from all four corners of the Earth. Countless others followed in his footsteps.

This global knowledge base collapsed in the nineteenth century—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it fragmented. For civilizations outside Europe, experts in the emerging field of oriental studies and in the likewise newly minted discipline of ethnology (or anthropology) were now the responsible authorities. There they fraternized among themselves, leaving scholars in the most prestigious and influential disciplines of academic life to narrow their focus on Europe. One example may serve to illustrate this trend. The leading historians of eighteenth-century Germany, such as August Ludwig Schlözer and Johann Christoph Gatterer at the University of Göttingen, had kept themselves as closely informed about the history of Asiatic nations as their sources of information permitted them to be, and they had been quite prepared to make space for these nations in their grand historical canvases. Leopold von Ranke, by

contrast, the most distinguished German historian of the following century, confined his late, idiosyncratic History of the World (1881-88) to the peoples of classical antiquity and postclassical Europe, in his eyes the only ones that truly mattered in world-historical terms. Ranke, a man with a pan-European perspective, still showed an interest in the Ottoman Empire; indeed, in Germany he was regarded for that reason as something of an Orientalist.27 Among the generation of his students, however, an obdurate Euro- or even Germanocentrism prevailed. Around the turn of the twentieth century, only the odd intellectual maverick such as Otto Hintze, Karl Lamprecht, Max Weber, or Kurt Breysig bucked the trend, drawing on the latest research in oriental studies to reconnect with the cosmopolitan outlook of the Enlightenment.

The Power of Discourse, The Burden of Learning

Just how serious was the eighteenth century's cosmopolitanism, how genuine its interest in the non-European world? To what extent did these modern oriental studies and ethnology. Sources are placed less in the contemporary context of their genesis than in a chronological sequence culminating in the current state of research. The primary interest in early modern travelers to Asia would then lie in what—by today's standards—they "already" saw correctly. Such an immanent history of knowledge accumulation is of limited usefulness. At best, it is applicable only to cartography, meticulous description of the natural world, and (with some reservations) linguistics…

Sensing and Constructing Difference

I want to venture down a different path in this book. What we casually refer to as "images" of Asia are accessed, above all, in texts. We work with texts for want of a better alternative. It is not because "culture" itself can be grasped as a text and the history of culture is therefore consummated in textual interpretation that we immerse ourselves in texts, but because there are no other sources at our disposal that so effectively convey how impressions and fantasies of foreignness are imported into native contexts of thinking and feeling. For historians, texts are the products of individual activity set against a societal framework.

They are deeply rooted in human praxis. The genesis of texts claims our initial interest. Each individual text emerges from a field of experience and intention, perception and imagination, seeing and hearing, convention and innovation. The text itself is a relatively late product of complex processes. Chapters 3 to 7 deal with these processes by sketching a kind of logistics for producing images of foreignness. This involves travel and the accumulation of useful knowledge, the mobile observer's concrete encounters and interactions with his or her alien cultural environment, the scholarly world (which has its own interests and standards of judgment), and finally the literary market with its laws of valuation and competition.

European texts on Asia should thus not be read in isolation as static "representations" of reality. We should instead situate them in their always-specific contexts of social praxis, paying careful attention to how they switch between real-world reference and fictionality, instruction and entertainment. Setting up the construction and depiction of foreign cultures as a mutually exclusive opposition, and hence interrogating texts only for their ideological content or only for their empirical accuracy, misrecognizes the shimmering multifacetedness of the great early modern accounts of Asia. That polyvalence is what constitutes their enduring appeal. They would hardly be worthy of our attention if they either merely mirrored European self-understandings or merely anticipated later and more reliable research findings. The texts discussed in this book are both at the same time: projections of the European imagination and attempts to grasp reality with the epistemic toolkit of the time.

A second level of contextualization is found where individual statements provide material for broader arguments. Asia functioned in multiple ways in European debates: debates about savagery and civilization, progress and decadence, governance and justice, the wealth and poverty of nations, the rights and happiness of women, truth and falsehood in religion. The second half of this book is taken up with several of these debates. Not everything could be covered: I lack the linguistic competence to give Asian languages the attention they deserve; and the topic of Asiatic religions is so vast that it would have threatened to overwhelm the book. Less than a history of "images," this book is a history of conceptualizations and their instruments: concepts and the overarching idioms or "languages" (in the sense given the term by the intellectual historian J.G.A. Pocock) of which they form the components.

The object of such conceptualizations were differences. What is remarkable about these differences is not the fact that they existed in the first place. To point out that Asia was Europe's Other is a trivial observation. But what was the nature of these differences in the eyes of individual authors? How were they evaluated? How were comparisons made between individual Asiatic civilizations, which differed from Europe and each other in ever-specific ways? A thinking that operates with simple dichotomies, such as the binary opposition between "native" and "foreign," impedes our understanding of how difference was perceived and posited in a broad spectrum of gradations. "Foreignness" is not an unambiguous and absolute category but a relative and endlessly variable one. Every single statement in seventeenth- or eighteenth-century texts that establishes a link between Europe and Asia charts such cultural differences anew. The historian's task is to reconstruct that process. To what end? In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Europe defined itself in opposition to Asia. What is interesting is not that this happened but how it happened. The times when one could rest satisfied with the simple template of an "inverted world" were long past. Where was the differentia specifica between East and West located in each particular case? Was this difference appraised as a sign of superiority or inferiority? Could it be bridged, or was it viewed as natural and inalterable? What strategies were used to contain the discomfort or even terror that such difference could give rise to in the observer? Did European visitors seek to repudiate and exclude the foreign, or did they attempt to assimilate and incorporate it, to meet it halfway, to domesticate it through colonization and revoke its otherness through Westernizing reforms? Whether the countless individual determinations of difference ultimately add up to a single discernible pattern and fit into a general history of shifts in European

mentality is the most difficult question of all. The last chapter of the book will attempt an answer to it. <>

[A Secular Age beyond the West: Religion, Law and the State in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa](#) by Mirjam Künkler and John Madeley, Shylashri Shankar [Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion and Politics, Cambridge University Press, 9781108417716]

[A Secular Age beyond the West: Religion, Law and the State in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa](#) traces religion and secularity in eleven countries not shaped by Western Christianity (Japan, China, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Russia, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, and Morocco), and how they parallel or diverge from Charles Taylor's grand narrative of the North Atlantic world, A Secular Age (2007). In all eleven cases, the state - enhanced by post-colonial and post-imperial legacies - highly determines religious experience, by variably regulating religious belief, practice, property, education, and/or law. Taylor's core condition of secularity - namely, legal permissibility and social acceptance of open religious unbelief (Secularity III) - is largely absent in these societies. The areas affected by state regulation, however, differ greatly. In India, Israel and most Muslim countries, questions of religious law are central to state regulation. But it is religious education and organization in China and church property and public practice in Russia that bear the brunt. This book explains these differences using the concept of 'differential burdening'.

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Preface

Excerpt: The inspiration for this book was born on a warm autumn day in the guesthouse of Bogaziçi University, in the early 2010s, where, overlooking the Bosphorus, many of the authors assembled, and other friends and colleagues gathered to discuss books that deeply stirred them and to which they wished to formulate a response. The group, made up mostly of sociologists and political scientists working on the nexus between politics, religion, and law, each an expert on a different country of the Middle East and Asia, soon settled on Charles Taylor's A Secular Age, a book that offers manifold entry points and intellectual foils to argue with and against, a book which with each reading takes on a new colour and evokes new imagery and insights. The path of working on this book together soon became an endpoint in itself, as the group grew closer and many of its members met again summer after summer in different constellations, working on

new projects as this one came to completion, and with subsets of its members crafting new cooperations in research, publishing, and joint teaching. As editors we are deeply grateful for this gift of companionship, both with one another and the wider group of fellow-travelers, creating a net of interlocutors with whom it was a pleasure and honor to agree and disagree, to understand and to occasionally misunderstand. Thus, over time, these intellectual companions became companions also of the heart, and we hope the group will live on in its various manifestations for many years to come.

With his monumental study [A Secular Age](), Charles Taylor created a new highpoint in contemporary thought about historical processes of secularization and the relationship between the religious and the non-religious in Western modernity. As a comprehensive treatment of the nature and the philosophy of "the secular" in Latin Christendom, the book has since become a major reference point for students of religion in the public sphere. Sociologist of religion José Casanova goes so far as to describe it as "the best analytical, phenomenological and genealogical account that we have of our modern, secular condition".

In his magnum opus, Taylor offers a historically grounded account of the emergence of secularity as a contingent process in societies characterized by Western Latin (but explicitly not Eastern Orthodox) Christianity. This process is presented as "the fruit of new inventions, newly constructed self-understandings and related practices, and can't be explained in terms of perennial features of human life". Taylor identifies instead a series of departures from earlier religious life that have allowed older forms to be dissolved or destabilized in favor of new, diverse religious, spiritual, non- and anti-religious options around large questions of meaning of society, the cosmos, and the self.

A Secular Age
Taylor's explicit focus on what he calls the "North Atlantic world" invites an exploration of secularity in other parts of the world. This is where our volume takes its starting point. Based on an international research cluster of country specialists interested in the nexus between politics and religion in countries

of Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East, this volume comparatively investigates the place of religion and non-religion in countries outside the heartland of Latin Christendom. The case studies focus on the patterns of religion—state relations in the modern era, wherein each has created particular conditions of belief. Taylor identifies three notions of Secularity, of which he is most interested in the third. The first notion, Secularity I, is that of the classic differentiation theory: it emerges as political authority, law, science, education, and the economy are emancipated from the influence of religious norms and authority. Secularity II is the notion describing the decline of religious belief and practice, something some sociologists argued was the case in the Europe of the 1960s and which they predicted would be a universal trend. Today, European Secularity II, if religion really has been on the decline there at all, is regarded as the global exception rather than the rule. But it is a third notion that particularly interests Taylor. Under Secularity III he understands a condition in which it is possible to not believe, and still aspire to live a fulfilled life; Secularity III emerges through "a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace". The shift to these new conditions of belief is reached by "a series of new departures," in which earlier forms of religious life are dissolved and new ones created. The way meaning is perceived has changed: What was once a human's "porous self" (going against God was not an option because life was lived in a social world peopled by spirits and fellow human beings) has been replaced by a "buffered self": a self aware of the possibility of disengagement. For nonbelievers, "the power to reach fullness is within [the human self]". This condition of Secularity III, according to Taylor, developed uniquely in the North Atlantic world, where it prevails today, and he leaves open the question of whether it could be, or has in the meantime been, realized in other parts of the world.

Secularity (in all three conceptions) in turn must be differentiated from secularization and secularism. Secularization denotes the historical process of the

emancipation (of the state, law, science,...) from religious authority and norms. Secularism usually denotes the ideology that legitimizes the separation of religious and political authority, the expulsion of religious law from the legal system, and sometimes even the exclusion of religion from the public sphere. The concept "secularism" rarely makes an appearance in A Secular Age, although Taylor has written about it extensively elsewhere.3 For social scientists, the relationship between Secularity I (a predominantly political and legal condition) and Secularity III (a predominantly cultural condition) is of greatest interest, as it calls for an exploration of the institutional dynamics behind the changes in the conditions of belief. A discussion of Secularity I, in turn, cannot in most cases be isolated from a discussion of a particular state's policy of secularism, though as our chapters illustrate, the relationship between secularism and Secularity I is complex, and the two phenomena often intertwine in counterintuitive ways.

The intellectual stakes of exploring the meaning of religion and the secular outside the West are very high. Few scholars will dispute today the idea of multiple modernities, and upon further probing many will also embrace the idea that secularity is not a condition unique to the West, but this is where the deep disagreements begin: can one talk of secularity in environments where the notion of religion may be largely incomparable to that born out of Latin Christendom (a monotheistic, exclusivist notion)? Can one talk of secularity in environments where religious identity is something not voluntarily acquired but imposed by state policies or social pressures? Can one talk of comparative secularity at all, when no state today can be characterized as entirely secular, in the sense of enforcing a watertight wall of separation between religion and politics? And how well do conceptions of the secular and secularity travel if even when only applied to the West they are already so fiercely contested at their core?

The interplay between religious and political transformation has been a central theme in the social sciences and humanities, to a point where the sociology of religion was long regarded as the heart of the enterprise of sociological inquiry. As Philip Gorski points out in Chapter 2 of this volume,

though the pedigree of secularization theory can be traced back for at least two centuries, its identifier is of more recent origin. Even Durkheim and Weber used the terms sécularisation/laïcisation and Säkularisierung, respectively, only in passing. It is only since the 1940s and 1950s that one can really speak of "secularization theory" as a dedicated research program in the social sciences. While the major premise — that "modernization" goes together with "secularization" — was widely accepted until the late 1970s, scholars disagreed over how to conceptualize secularization and what to regard as its proper indicators. For Bryan Wilson (1966), secularization denoted the institutional decline of religion, while David Martin saw it manifested in declining levels of membership in religious communities, and Steve Bruce in declining levels and intensities of belief. Peter Berger argued in [The Sacred Canopy](#) (1967) that a defining feature of secularization was that the plausibility structures behind religious belief were seriously compromised, while Niklas Luhmann (1977) spoke of the "privatisation of religious decision-making." Scholars moreover disagreed over where these trends manifested themselves and whether one should regard them as universal or specific to particular geographies. Thomas Luckmann (1967) criticized that the diagnoses of declining levels and intensities of belief were premised on an impoverished notion of religion, and ignorant of the ways in which "invisible religion" continued to play an important role in modern society. David Martin (1978) cast doubt on the assumption of the universal character of religious decline and instead argued in favor of understanding differentiation as the one universal characteristic of secularization in the world. Despite these intense disagreements over what secularization meant precisely and how it manifested itself, secularization theory became the only theory, in the words of a major sociologist of religion "that was able to attain a truly paradigmatic status within the modern social sciences".

A cesura in the debate was José Casanova's 1994 book, in which the author took stock of how present empirical realities related to various aspects of secularization theory and in which he did the

debate an enormous service by disentangling its various sub-theories. Casanova argued that the theory was only one-third defensible: while it was right about the functional and institutional differentiation of the religious from the political, legal, economic, scientific, and other spheres, it had, in his view, been proven wrong in its claims concerning the decline of religious belief and practice, and remained deeply questionable with respect to the inevitable privatization of religion. More recently, in particular in response to an intervention by Talal Asad, Casanova has distanced himself from the one sub-theory he earlier on sought to salvage and conceded that it is almost impossible to heuristically distinguish the privatization from the differentiation thesis.

In the face of the continuing difficulties to analytically capture macrosocial dynamics in the relationship between religion and its outside (whether social, political, legal, or economic) in comparative and theoretically meaningful ways, newer research has turned to concentrate on examining boundary formation around the religious and the non-religious' and to revisit the question of path dependencies and critical junctures in Secularity I which were once David Martin's primary field of interest. In this volume, we take up these two re-directions: issues of boundary-formation and -activation receive particular attention in the individual chapters, while the conclusion aims to identify broader parallels and divergences in the path dependencies that emerge in subsets of the cases, although no claims are made to propose generalizable theories on paths of secularization (not least because the number of cases does not permit such an endeavor, but also because as country specialists we are hesitant to engage in too crude abstractions).

In the following, we briefly introduce some of Taylor's main insights about the etiology and ontology of Secularity III, and how our contributors have responded to these. We then outline the case selection and theoretical angle taken in this volume and the special emphases emanating from this choice as compared to the narratives proposed in A Secular Age. We close by drawing attention to four issue areas around religion that have emerged as common themes across the eleven case studies of this volume, often in contrast or in variance with Taylor's account. We should note that these themes are necessarily synoptic, as we lay out a terrain of topics emerging from the comparative reflection that in our view would merit closer future examination.

The Legacies of Vision and Di-Vision

In considering the relevance of Taylor's analysis for understanding the presence or absence of Secularity III beyond the West, the collective focus of this volume lies on the relationship between the diverse "conditions of belief" (Secularity III) and the distinctive political and legal traditions with which they appear to be associated, including formal public institutions and spaces (Secularity I). This focus enables us to test the intuition that Taylor's work may underemphasize the significance of legal, political, and other factors in framing and influencing the conditions of belief that he foregrounds in his account. Each of the chapters makes a point of seeking to understand the role played by societal, economic, and political actors in channeling, curbing, and molding conditions of belief.

In the first chapter, Philip Gorski situates Taylor's main contribution to the secularization debate in his development of the notion of Secularity III. He identifies conceptual tools in the sociology of religion that can complement Taylor's by facilitating sociological rather than philosophical analysis. Drawing on Taylor, Niklas Luhmann, and Pierre Bourdieu, Gorski offers typologies to assist in the study of the relationships between Secularities I and III by distinguishing between various systems of Secularity I. For instance, his typologies help to point out why American secularism differs from Indian secularism, or how Turkish laiklik ought to be distinguished from French laïcité. Gorski further proposes a set of sensitizing concepts to help give causal accounts for the type of secular settlements to religious conflicts he observed. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, Gorski posits that one can also see secular settlements as the result of "classification struggles" over the dominant "principle of vision and di-vision" that governs relations between the religious and political fields: segmentary, functional, stratificatory, and

center/periphery divisions. On the basis of the three Taylorian competing goods of liberty, equality, and fraternity (cp. Taylor's concept of secularism), and Bourdieu's classification struggles, Gorski then outlines four archetypal patterns of Secularity I: consociationalism, religious nationalism, radical secularism, and liberal secularism.

Drawing on Gorski's suggestion for the "translation" of Taylor's grand narrative into sociological theory by way of complementing the latter's analytical tools with those of other scholars, the subsequent chapters each present an account of particular secularization trends and processes outside the West. The combination of global scope and a commitment to a shared analytical framework relying on Taylor's methodology of historically grounded analysis, together with Gorski's conceptual addenda, constitutes the book's principal claim to fill a niche in the study of comparative secularization. In assessing how political and legal structures affect the conditions of religious belief and practice, the chapters highlight four major themes, which in our reading distinguish our case studies from Taylor's unit of analysis.

As we shall see, the overdetermining factor — in creating a major role for the state in formulating what religion is, and is not, and often intertwining it with loyalty to the nation — seems to be the experiences of colonialism and imperialism, and their legacies. Subsequent efforts by state elites and other actors to conceptualize and mark out the domains of the secular and the religious were shaped to a great extent by the encounter with the colonial powers and their religions, that is in most cases different forms of Christianity. The "imperial" encounter between Western powers and the rest of the world had a profound impact on virtually all traditions involved. During the half-millennium on which Taylor's narrative concentrates, the Latin Christian West successfully imposed elements of itself on the rest of the world by means of its great maritime empires, so spreading its influence even where its missionaries failed to convert those of other traditions to one or another form of Western Christianity. Many traditions were destroyed and supplanted, others weakened, and transformed in different ways, while yet others appeared to

emerge paradoxically reinforced from the encounter — but none remained unaffected.

Notions of the "Secular" and the "Religious"

The first theme emerging from the case studies is a questioning of the applicability of notions of the secular and the religious in some of the societies under review. What is "secular" depends to a large extent on what is perceived as "religious," and vice versa. Zhe Ji highlights the fact that pluralism, where faith is but one position among many, is an old story in China, rather than a particularly modern condition of belief. Laypersons could believe in and practice the available teachings in a pluralistic way: there was no sense of a clear-cut and exclusive religious identity according to established criteria of orthodoxy. Religion was conceived not in terms of the object or content of belief, but rather by the manner in which beliefs and practices are systematically stimulated, justified, maintained, and transmitted. In fact, both religion and education were conceptualized in traditional China by the same term: jiao; with no explicit semantic distinction between them. Accordingly, Ji argues, to this day "education" retains a primacy in Chinese notions of the sacred.

In Japan as well as in China, translated trade treaties with Western (and Christian) imperial powers introduced a Western-influenced concept of religion into the local lexicon. Simultaneously, as Helen Hardacre points out, the Japanese government enacted draconian policies against Buddhism, resulting in the latter's loss of its former role in governance. The Buddhist authorities reacted with reform measures to conform the tradition to governmental notions of what religion proper ought to be, recasting the Buddhist belief system, and positioning it within the private sphere. It would be a mistake, suggests Hardacre, to imagine that the thinking of the ordinary, non-elite Japanese (other than Hidden Christians) was structured by a dichotomy between belief and unbelief. Ordinary people seem generally to have regarded the Buddhist clergy with respect, but the clergy was not called upon to demonstrate doctrinal orthodoxy and commitment as part of its temple affiliation. Not only was subscription to particular beliefs not

axiomatic in Japan; belief or unbelief was not made a central issue. Instead, fulfilling the obligations of temple affiliation and showing deference to authority appear to have been key. Those in authority used Buddhism to regulate the populace, but for the most part did not regard it as binding on themselves. Thus, Hardacre shows, subordination of religion to the state meant that religious life could easily — though not inevitably — become formalistic, a matter of performance rather than an expression of personal conviction.

The lack of a clear dichotomy between belief and unbelief is also relevant to understanding the notion of "Hinduism" in India. Shylashri Shankar uses Taylor's concept of the "social imaginary" to highlight the interplay between three separate imaginaries of Hinduism — as a religion, a culture, and an ancient order — in the constitution and in subsequent interpretations by the apex court. These three partly competing and partly complementary imaginaries of Hinduism have generated a great deal of ambiguity about what constitutes "religion," "religious rhetoric," and "secularism" in contemporary India. In A Secular Age, Taylor differentiates between the social imaginary and social theory. While theory is often the possession of a small minority, the social imaginary is shared by large groups of people, if not the whole society. For Taylor, "imaginary" refers to the way ordinary people "imagine" their social surroundings, in images, stories, legends, etc. It is that common understanding which makes possible common practices and therefore belongs to the background understanding of the normal expectations people have toward one another. Shankar suggests that the imaginaries of Hinduism as a culture and as an ancient order are forms of lived experience which pertain to a person regardless of whether she or he is a believer or not. The immanent frame of the imaginary of someone like the Brahmin savant who views Hinduism as an ancient order or someone who talks about "Indian culture" would not include Taylor's trio of secularities but could fit into Taylor's notion of transcendence in Secularity III. This ambiguity has both complicated the state's efforts to manage the diversity of beliefs and aggravated the crisis of secularism in India. But by creating a "zone of ambiguity" for the state, it has prevented the state from being torn apart in the fierce battles between majority and minority religions and between co-religionists.

These considerations make it difficult in China, India, or Japan to draw the boundaries between the "religious" and the non-religious. Notably, all three have no dominant monotheistic tradition. In all the other cases included, whether shaped by Judaism, Orthodox Christianity, or Islam, conflict lines revolve more around the borders and gray areas of particular religions than around definitions of religion itself.

The "Secular" and the "Religious" According to Whom?

Related to the question of what constitutes religion and its absence is the question of who it is who draws the boundaries. Taylor observes, "secular societies are not just mankind minus the religion ... They produce not unillusioned individuals who see the facts of existence nakedly, but people constituted by a distinct set of ethical goods, temporal frameworks, and practical contexts". In the cases studied here, this set of ethical goods, temporal frameworks, and practical contexts is strongly conditioned by state policies — of what is recognized as religion and what is not, which ethical goods are stressed in public education and which ones are not, and how the state defines practices as public, thereby differentiating between private and public practices (by constructing and maintaining places of worship, establishing public religious holidays, etc.). As such, models of Secularity I are distinctively molded by political elites, the policies they devise, and the regulations they apply. Taylor's pointing to Secularity I as a project shaped by elites is a concern for several of the contributors. In Japan and Russia, state projects aimed at molding the secular citizen, while in Indonesia and Morocco the model citizen was a religious one. The cases of Turkey, Egypt, Israel, and India combine aspects of both, oscillating between more religious and more secular notions of citizenship. The case of Iran exhibits both models in subse¬quent fashion with the 1979 revolution representing the cesura between the two.

In Japan, Helen Hardacre suggests, it was in the Meiji Period when secularity came to dominate public discourse. Recasting well-known aspects of modern Japanese history and religion in the light of Taylor's account, she shows that Japan may be seen as an early example of an elite-driven, westernizing, secularizing project undertaken in reaction against Western imperialism, preceding similar developments ("defensive developmentalism") in Turkey, Iran, India, Indonesia, and China. Challenging the view once dominant in Japan and elsewhere that secularity was a largely neutral by-product of modernization, her chapter reveals how debates among elites shaped the bureaucratic means through which the populace would be indoctrinated with secular morality.

For Russia, John Madeley discusses the paradoxically abortive attempt by Soviet elites to bring about the birth of secularity "as if by means of a virtual caesarian procedure." In January 1918, the revolutionary government issued a Decree on the Separation of the State from the Church and the Church from the School. The decree deprived the Russian Church of legal personality, thereby rendering it incapable of holding property in its own right.

In a way, the opposite project of an elite-driven formation of the religious and secular was at work in Indonesia. Mirjam Künkler shows how, in the post-independence period, state elites channeled their efforts toward creating not the secular but the "religious citizen" of Indonesia, the manusia agama. From the beginning of the constitutional era in 1945, the state was defined as a religious rather than a secular state, albeit without specifying a particular religion. To promote the religious citizen without specifying the religion was a way to transcend inter-religious divisions and to create a religious morality that was not uniquely, Islamic, Hindu, or Christian. In contrast to the secular nation-building project of Japan, Indonesian nation-building involved the state promotion of a pan-religious ethos, the so-called pancasila, as well as the molding of the country's major mono- and polytheist religions in its light. The Ministry of Religion became the pivotal player in imposing these reforms. Religions that did not adapt were

denied recognition, and their adherents lost the rights of full citizenship as a result. To profess one of the state-recognized religions was made a requirement for citizenship; non-religion, or Secularity III (where religion and non-religion are both viable options), was and is still today not a legal possibility in Indonesia.

The project of political elites forming a particular religious, rather than secularized, public sphere is also evident in Morocco's post-colonial history. Jonathan Wyrtzen discusses how the Moroccan monarchy, which claims the politico-religious title "Commander of the Faithful," has attempted to monopolize public religion since independence in 1956. Islam is recognized constitutionally as the official state religion, and the palace has reinforced the public presence of Islam, partly in order to pre-empt an Islamist challenge.

Israel, Turkey, Egypt, and India provide more mixed systems. Here, too, state elites took a leading role in delineating the public conception of religion, but state policies were not always aimed at reinforcing religious over secular notions of citizenship, or vice versa.

While the Israeli state formally recognizes thirteen non-Jewish religions, it grants official status to only one particular definition of Orthodox Judaism for purposes of conversion and marriage. The state thus continues to reject alternative religious (e.g. Reform and Conservative) or secular definitions of "who is a Jew." Moreover, within the territory of Israel, the state recognizes conversion into Orthodox Judaism only, while recognizing any type of conversion (e.g. Reform/Conservative) made abroad. As Hanna Lerner shows in her chapter, the problem is particularly acute for 300,000 immigrant Jews from the former Soviet Union. The Orthodox rabbinate, which enjoys exclusive authority in matters of Jewish marriage and divorce, does not recognize these immigrants as Jews, thereby denying them any chance of lawful marriage.

Kemal Atatürk went further than leaders in most other Muslim-majority states in monopolizing for the state the right to define religion and to privilege specific Islamic teachings over others. Unlike Iran, Indonesia, Egypt, Morocco, and Pakistan, whose

courts continue to recognize Islamic law in some areas, Mustafa Kemal entirely eradicated religious law after the abolition of the caliphate in 1924 and erected a wholly secular legal system based on the French model. Religious education was prohibited for several years, as were religious political parties and organizations. After the 1950s, religion was gradually permitted to re-enter the public sphere, but only on state terms. Until today, the Presidency of Religious Affairs (diyanet) trains and certifies Islamic preachers and determines the content of sermons. Islam can be studied only in state schools, and all personnel of the mosques, including preachers, are civil servants. Alevism, which as much as 20 percent of the Turkish population may profess, remains unrecognized by the state and, as such, is discriminated against. Islam, as a state-defined religion, only includes Sunni Islam, though beyond the state's purview alternative forms of Islam continue to be practiced.

Egypt's history, too, exhibits an oscillation between religious and secular notions of citizenship and sometimes a combination of policies furthering both at the same time. Gudrun Krämer points out that Ottoman modernizer Muhammad Ali who introduced European legal codes without abolishing religious ones, sought to produce pious subjects, not secular ones. After independence, the state projected itself as the guardian of Egyptian identity, which would include the religions of the demographic majority and minority. Since the 1970s, the state elevated Islam to a source of law and promoted public professions of Islamic piety while at the same time invoking the concept of secularism to repress and control political Islam.

In India, some political elites worked to secularize the public sphere while others used religious motifs to "Hinduize" it. The colonial administration used the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian elites to codify personal law regimes. These laws continued to operate after independence, but the scope of religious freedom was carved out mainly by the judiciary, and in a few instances by the democratically elected parliament (for Hindu personal law) as well as civil society-religious group discussions (Christian personal law). The approach of Jawaharlal Nehru (the first Prime Minister of independent India), which incorporated

a normative project of secularization into the constitution and removed religion from politics, would contain the hope of moving from Secularity I to III. But the Hindu nationalists, who rose to power in the 1990s, aimed to use religious motifs to win elections. The courts, as Shylashri Shankar points out, were drawn into these battles and through their judgments further muddled the notions of secularity and religion.

The Iranian case exhibits best the transition between both extremes. During the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979), the Iranian case resembled the Turkish and to some extent Russian cases, insofar as the clergy was deprived of its monopoly over education and jurisprudence. Institutions of Shiite Islam were pushed out of the public sphere and relegated to caring for the hereafter, without any remaining necessity of contact between the citizen and the clergy. Yet in contrast to the Russian case, the Pahlavi secularization policies were lost on the larger society; rigorous enforcement of secular policies legitimized the Shiite clergy and inspired a revival of religious practice. In 1979, social mobilization toppled the secularist monarchy and reversed the policies of differentiation by binding political and religious authority. What was once relegated to the private sphere was brought back into the public realm, specifically religious law, religious education, and religious authority. What remained the same, as Nader Hashemi shows, was that even after the 1979 revolution, state policy toward religion was driven by an elite that imposed its notions of "religious" and "secular" onto the populace.

Secularity, Religion, and Nationalism

The third theme is the link between secularity and nationalism in a state's conceptualization of the place of religion in public life. In Indonesia and India, the national project soon after independence became contrasted in the public imagination with the majority religion; nationalism therefore also stood for equality of the citizenry irrespective of religious identity — it served as an ideology to integrate a culturally and religiously diverse society. In other countries, such as Turkey, Iran, Egypt, and Morocco, the national project in the 1950s and 1960s became coterminous with the

identification of the nation with the majority religion. In Israel and Pakistan, the link between the nation and religion was particularly strong as both consolidating states defined themselves against, and experienced wars with, neighbors of other religious backgrounds. In Japan, the link between religion and the nation was strong, too, although after 1945 it was no longer only the majority religion which was mobilized in favor of allegiance to the nation. From this comparative vantage point, India and Indonesia stand out for formulating decidedly inclusivist notions of the nation meant to embrace religious diversity. Some authors have pointed to the strong impression Indonesia's pancasila had on Nehru in this regard.

In Indonesia, upon the country's independence in 1945, constitutional debates circled around the question of the proper place of Islam in the emerging state. Against calls for the introduction of Islamic law, opponents objected that the proclamation of an Islamic state would cause the Christian-majority islands in the East to secede. Over the years, the latter defined themselves as the "nationalists" and branded their opponents as "Islamists." Nationalism became linked to pancasila, the pan-religious ideology conceived by the country's first president, Sukarno. Although a rapprochement between Islamic elites and the state occurred during the last years of Suharto's presidency, the national project has to this day been defined as an inclusive project under which Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists have equal rights.

In India as well, a major concern for the Constituent Assembly was how to douse the flames of post-Partition strife between Hindus and Muslims. The notion of a Hindu India was rejected by the framers and while the debates recognized the need to separate those aspects of religious dissentions that could demolish democratic stability, there was little agreement on how to achieve this objective. Some saw a secular state as the separation of state and church (religion would not be permitted in the public sphere). Others saw it as neutrality of the state toward religion, which could function in the public sphere. A third view maintained that while the state would treat all religions equally, the state had a duty to reform

religious practices in line with principles of equality and justice (what Rajeev Bhargava [11998] refers to as "principled distance"). The constitution ultimately did not define the terms "Hindu," "religion," "secular," and "minorities," and left it to the courts and legislature to do so. Hindu nationalists continued to call for "Hindu India" over the decades, but others challenged this view and advocated a "secular" India.

In Turkey, religion, modernization, and the national project were closely interwoven early in the republic. With the end of the caliphate in 1924, Istanbul ceased to function as the center of a transnational Islam, and a new, national kind of Islam was conceived. This new Islam would complement rather than hinder Atatürk's modernization vision. As Ash Bâli shows, far from conceiving nationalism as an anti-religious project, Kemal Atatürk spent the better part of his tenure developing a particular kind of state-sponsored Islam that could be put in the service of the national project.

In Iran, ideas of national self-definition and independence from the West nourished the 1979 revolution. Revolutionaries sought to regain the sovereignty they believed their nation had lost through the Shah's military and economic dependence on the United States and Britain in particular. In 1963, the Iranian government granted legal immunity to US citizens within the country, sparking a series of protests and demonstrations coordinated by the Shiite clergy through their tight religious and educational networks. Mosques became rallying places, and in 1979 they provided sanctuaries from the Shah's police and military. The Iranian case also points to the tension between nationalism and transnationalism in the Muslim world. Islam can be a potent force for national unification and mobilization, but its universalist message and global interconnectedness can also undermine nationalist movements. The post-revolutionary Iranian elite thus tried hard to portray the 1979 revolution not as an Iranian or Shiite revolution, but as an Islamic revolution representative of a more universal struggle which many Muslim societies at that time were fighting against despotism, dependency, and injustice. It is in this light that

contemporary Iranian elites claim the 2011 uprisings in the Arab world are part of the same struggle against secular despotism that the 1979 Iranian revolution established.

In Morocco, Arabic-speaking elites struggling against colonialism defined the nation as Arab-Islamic. For these nationalists, policies of Arabization of the citizenry and the Islamization of the legal code were the chief instruments of nation-building. After independence, the Arabic triptych "Allah [God], al-Watan [the Nation], and al-Malik [the King]" was adopted in the constitution as the national motto. Over the past five decades of independence, the monarchy has defined Moroccan national identity, portraying itself as the embodiment of the united nation. Since 2001, King Mohamed VI has promoted pluralism and tolerance, diluting the Arab-Islamic character of national identity. The state now recognizes its own Arab and Berber heritages (in addition to secondary Saharan-Hassanic, African, Jewish, Andalusian, and Mediterranean influences). In terms of religion, this shift has involved a continued emphasis on Islam as a shared Moroccan identity, but also the promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding among faiths in Morocco.

Gudrun Krämer points out that the Egyptian resistance to Ottoman rule, and from 1882 on British colonialism, mobilized both secular and religious sentiments. The union between the crescent and the cross, and between Egyptian nationalism and religion remained supple and ambiguous in the inter-war period.

In the Israeli and the Pakistani contexts, religion became particularly strongly intertwined with nationalism, as the concept of the nation here hinges on the continuing centrality of Jewish and Muslim identity, respectively, for its citizens. In both states, symbols, metaphors, and the rhetoric of religion are often blended with national tropes meant to teach citizens that the survival of the nation's religion depends on the survival of the state. The political adversary is conceived also as a religious adversary. Disagreements about whether Judaism is an ethnic, national, or religious identity infuse the debates that Hanna Lerner analyzes in her chapter on Israel.

In the case of Pakistan, the ulama have reinvented themselves as the "custodians" of true Islam in light of the fact that the Sunni authorities of the Middle East have, so they argue, been corrupted by state elites, and Middle Eastern Islam has been "diluted" by politically driven reinterpretation projects. The survival of the religious tradition, so the argument goes, therefore requires the continued existence of Pakistan and the safe haven it grants to its scholars and religious leaders. Christophe Jaffrelot outlines how the intelligentsia defined religion as a collective identity in order to create a unified, modern citizenry. The shift from religious belief to religious identity — also emphasized in Nader Hashemi's chapter on Iran — is a variant of the secularization process that eventuated in an alternative form of secularity not captured in Taylor's conceptualization. Jaffrelot terms this "Secularity IV," a condition where religion has become a signifier for ethno-national identities. Secularity IV is epitomized by the "Pakistan movement," an ethnoreligious nationalist movement fusing Islam with language identity. In Israel, similar arguments can be heard by Orthodox religious authorities who deem Judaism impossible without Jewish control over the principal religious sites.

In Japan, the relationship between Shinto and the sacralization of the emperor and the nation was particularly strong during the Meiji restauration, but even after 1945 religion was often put into the service of mobilizing imperial loyalties on behalf of modern nation-building. Village headmen and wealthy local gentry regularly sponsored lectures for the peasantry by Confucian teachers, popular Shinto preachers, and (late in the period) some of the leaders of the lay-centered new religious movements of the mid-nineteenth century. Authorities hoped to shore up allegiance to the social order by calling on preachers of all stripes to extol the conventional morality of filial piety, loyalty to the lord, modesty, frugality, and diligence.

Imperialism and Other Encounters with the West

The fourth common theme emanating from the case studies pertains to how the historical encounter between the West and other parts of Europe, Asia,

the Middle East, and North Africa shaped the present struggles over modernity and the process of secularization. In all case studies, this encounter appears to be the single most important factor in structuring later public conceptions of religion and its desired role in the public.

South Asia's encounter with the West and its passage through colonialism resulted in an attempt to emulate Western science and rationalism, but only by a miniscule intellectual elite. In India, three elements are identified as central to the role played by Europeans in the construction of Hinduism as a religion: a Western Christian concept of religion, the idea that Indian religions formed one pan-Indian religion, and the needs of the colonial enterprise.

These moves to create a unified religion in India were closely linked to the legal codification of the colonial subject, and as Shankar shows, were retained after independence in the country's constitution and laws, thus significantly shaping the new social imaginaries of how religion and non-religion are experienced by India's diverse communities.

In the chapter on Morocco, Wyrtzen examines how the French imposition of a protectorate form of colonial rule from 1912 to 1956 established conditions for a specific form of "Moroccan secularity" through processes of pluralization and differentiation at the political, economic, and social levels that continued into the post-independence era. French rule introduced a special form of Secularity I, dividing between a modern bureaucratic and traditional state. Religion was used to legitimate the nominal maintenance of the spiritual and political sovereignty of the Sultan, but, at a practical level, Islam's public role was prescribed within the confines of the newly created ministry of religious affairs (awqaf or habous). The colonial state also partly reified pre-existing ethnic and religious classifications, and partly created these anew, by imposing separate judicial, educational, and administrative structures for Arabs, Berbers, and Jews. In the aftermath of constitutional reforms initiated in response to the Arab Spring protests in 2011, colonial legacies and Western exemplars have been relevant in

ongoing debates about the outlines and boundaries of Moroccan secularity with regards to religious freedom, women's rights, ethno-pluralism, and the separation of powers between the monarchy and the parliament.

In Indonesia, the efforts by the post-independence governments to unify the various legal systems that had differentiated the colonial subject population based on ethnicity and religion were primarily driven by the desire to counter the colonial pluri-legal framework and instead provide "one law for all." Those favoring a law blind to religious identity were able to associate in the public imagination the advocates of Islamic law with a "colonial mindset," re-producing colonial divisions in the law instead of embracing an inclusive notion of the people irrespective of religious background. Institutionally, too, post-independence religion—state relations were shaped by imperial and colonial legacies: The bureaucratic basis laid during the Japanese occupation for the state regulation of religious affairs evolved into the key institution of managing religion after independence, the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Japan's first encounter with secularity, argues Hardacre, was inseparable from mid-nineteenth-century Western imperialism. The Japanese were acutely aware of China's degradation and defeat in the Opium Wars, and they saw clearly that if they failed to strengthen Japan, Western powers would colonize the country.

In each of the case studies, the relationship between the process of secularization and that society's encounters with the West are embedded in and exemplified by the respective local debates about modernity.

Conclusion

In [The Devil's Dictionary](), the American satirist Ambrose Bierce describes religion as "a daughter of Hope and Fear, explaining to Ignorance the nature of the Unknowable". The contributors to this volume have attempted to make the unknowable a little less inscrutable. What emerges from the analysis is the multiplicity of processes and the variations in Secularity I that make "secular regimes" or "secular states" — so often an underlying concept in the humanities and social

sciences — problematic and reductionist terms. If anything, the case studies assembled here speak to "multiple secularities" or "varieties of the secular," thus continuing the nuancing of the term "secularization" used in Katznelson and Stedman Jones's volume. While the social sciences have started to think of Secularity I as a continuum rather than some fixed quantity, determined by the level of regulation of religion by the state, these case studies illustrate the need for additional heuristic dimensions able to capture the impact on religion of state policies. This effect differs markedly across different civilizational contexts, depending on the realms regulated by religious authorities prior to the emergence of the modern state. Accordingly, in Islam it is religious law that experiences profound interference by the twentieth-century state; in China's Confucian traditions, it is education. The importance of capturing this variation in "burdening" (how expansive is the contact surface of religion that can be affected by states policies?) in an account of Secularity I becomes apparent especially when comparing such encounters across various monotheistic and polytheistic, as well as non-theistic traditions.

What of the emergence of Secularity III that lies at the center of Taylor's story? In some states, such as Russia, the Taylorean trajectory has unfolded recognizably; in others, such as Pakistan or Iran, some elements are similar but the local conditions have given birth to yet other types of secularity that cannot be captured by either Secularity I, II, or III. While the answers to the question of why religion has in recent years persisted in challenging its exclusion from the public sphere appear to be country-specific, one of the most striking observations emerging from all chapters is that religion has in fact never been excluded from the public sphere, with the possible exception of Russia in the 1930s and China during the so-called Cultural Revolution; by contrast, all case studies testify to the manifold ways in which the modern state, far from marginalizing religion, put it into its service, often in order to legitimize national, developmental, and sometimes even economic goals. Counter-intuitively, this, as our contributors suggest, is the case even in Soviet Russia after 1943 and Atatürk's Turkey.

This latter insight challenges us to rethink how the struggle between religion and state is conditioned. Gorski reviews the line in political thought that conceives of secularization as a segmentary form of differentiation, in which "church" and "state" have identical structures and equal powers but separate jurisdictions. He notes that "from Augustine's 'two cities' through Marsilius' `two swords' to Luther's 'two kingdoms', this was a common and recurring position in the history of Latin Christendom. The segmentary principle still has champions today, both amongst political liberals, advocating a strict `separation of church and state', but also amongst religious sectarians, defending the autonomy of their communities". The case studies of this volume point to the fallacy of this position, insofar as it conceives of "church"/organized religion and state as possibly equally strong competitors. In no country studied here do the institutional manifestations of religion and the state hold equal power. Indeed, it is unfeasible for organized religion to express demands vis-à-vis the state that could lead to a segmentary form of differentiation. The institutional means of the state, ranging from law to coercion, preclude a situation in which organized religion and state would have equal powers but separate jurisdictions. The stratificatory conflicts between principal actors in the religious and political fields have been won by the latter. Given this alternative account of Secularity I (regulation of religion by the state rather than mere differentiation), the conflicts to which the modern state, with its means of coercion and consent, is a party are not limited to conflicts concerning the proper relationship between the religious and non-religious fields, but also concern conflicts between and within religious communities. We return to this point in the concluding chapter. Accordingly, the case studies presented here suggest that the conditions of belief (Secularity III) need to be recognized not only as a product of internal reform within religions which must be their starting point, but also the enabling conditions of state policies, which necessarily produce and shape the conditions of belief — whether such policies stem from parliamentary decisions, executive decrees, or judicial rulings. <>

[Imaginations of Death and the Beyond in India and Europe](#) edited by Günter Blamberger, Sudhir Kakar [Springer, 9789811067068]

This volume explores current images of afterlife/afterdeath and the presence of the dead in the imaginations of the living in Indian and European traditions. Specifically, it focuses on the deepest and most fundamental uncertainty of human existence---the awareness of human mortality, on which depends any assignment of meaning to earthly existence as also to notions of worldly and otherworldly salvation. This central idea is addressed in the literature, arts, audiovisual media and other cultural artefacts of the two traditions. The chapters are based on two main assumptions: First, that one cannot report on the direct experience of death; so it is only possible to speak allegorically of it. Second, in contemporary Western societies, marked by structural atheism, people look at literature, the arts and mass media to study their depiction and reading of traditionally religious questions of disease, death and the Beyond. This is in contrast to Asian civilizations whose preoccupation with death and Beyond is persistent and perhaps central to the civilizations' highest thought.

The chapters cover a wide spectrum of disciplinary approaches, from psychoanalysis to religious, anthropological, literary and film studies, from sociology and philosophy to art history, and address issues of unsettling power: comforting illusions of afterlife; the relations between afterlife and fertility; visions of technological immortalization of mankind; the problem of thinking about death after the "death of God"; socialist utopias of bodily immortality; fear of Hell and punishment; different concepts in relating the living and the dead; near-death experiences; and cultural practices of spiritualism, occultism and suicide.

Two Stories About the Unimaginability of Death

"The Godfather Death" (Der Gevatter Tod) is a German fairy tale in the famous collection of the Brothers Grimm. It tells the story of a child whose godfather and career counselor is Death. When the child has grown up, his godfather advises him:

Now you should become a doctor. Only be careful when you are called by a patient. If you see me standing by his head, then there is nothing to worry. Let him smell the oil in this bottle and anoint his feet. Then he would soon recover. If I am standing by his feet, then it is over, then he belongs to me, so do not dare to start a treatment. The godson becomes a famous doctor. Later, he gets into a difficult situation when the king is lying mortally ill and Death is standing at the foot of his bed. The doctor decides to cheat Death. He simply turns the bed around so that Death now stands by the king's head. Though the king recovers immediately, Godfather Death is annoyed with his godson's trickery. When the godson successfully repeats the same trick again with the beautiful princess lying on her deathbed, Godfather Death grabs him by his neck and drags him into a subterranean cave lit with thousands of candles, where he shows the presumptuous doctor the limits of his power and the punishment that awaits him: "Here you see all living beings, and here is the little flickering light that will soon be extinguished. That is your life; beware!"

This fairy tale, which tells the story of the wishes and nightmares of a doctor, has not lost its relevance till today. In order to understand its topicality, one needs only to think of the death determination debates concerning the visibility, the recognition of the moment of death, and the power of a doctor to define the end of a life, which can also be understood as a presumptuous thanatocracy. The problem of visibility of death is in a different way also the main issue in arts and literature. How can one represent something which one has not experienced and of which no reports exist?

'All translations by the authors. English editions of "Godfather Death" follow later versions of the Brothers Grimm's fairy tale with another ending: the godfather, desiring revenge, kills the physician.

"As long as we exist, death is not, and when death is, we no longer exist" (Epicurus). With this comforting formula, Epicurus sought to banish the human fear of death. With this argument, death is no longer an event in life. What one has

experienced or could experience can be mimetically represented. Death, of course, cannot be represented in this manner. We can only speak allegorically of death; the notion, the idea of death must be clothed in images—in images of the flickering or extinguished light of fife, for example. Perhaps we do not fear death but the unimaginability of all which may happen after death? We suffer from this deficit of imagination and therefore flee into the thanatological phantasies of literature, arts, and media. The artistic representation of death and the beyond is a paradox. The prospect of re-presentation is what is absent, for death is what cannot be presented. Thus every depiction of death and the beyond produces images which do not belong to death or life after death, but to life before death or to different worldviews.

This also holds true for the Indian civilization whose preoccupation with death and the beyond is not only ancient, but one which many believe has been central to the civilization's highest thought. In 300 BCE, Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to Chandragupta Maurya's court, remarked of Indians:

> Death is with them a frequent subject of discourse. They regard this life as, so to speak, the time when the child within the womb becomes mature, and death as a birth into a real and happy life for the votaries of philosophy. On this account they undergo much discipline as a preparation for death.

Kathopanishad, one of the principal Upanishads (800-300 BCE), which are considered the acme of Indian philosophical and metaphysical thought, tells the story of Nachiketa (lit. "one who doesn't know") extracting the secrets of the afterdeath from the god of death, Yama himself. The story goes that a poor Brahmin performs a sacrifice to the gods and gives a few old and feeble cows as presents to the officiating priests. His teenage son, upset with his father's niggardliness, asks him, "Father, to whom will you give me?" The father does not reply but the son persists with the question till the angry father bursts out, "I will give you to Yama" (Kathopanishad).

As a dutiful son who cannot let his father's words go in vain, Nachiketa journeys to the house of the god of death. Yama is away and the boy waits for his return without having eaten. On his return, Yama offers three wishes to Nachiketa as recompense for the discomfort of the three days and nights the boy had waited. The first two wishes of the boy are to let him return alive to his father, and providing him the description of the ritual that is an aid to reaching heaven. As his third wish, Nachiketa asks, "There is this doubt in regard to a man who has departed, some holding that he is and some he is not. I want you to instruct me on this issue. This is my third wish."

Yama is reluctant. "Even the gods have doubt on this point. The truth about after death is so subtle that it is not easy to understand. Do not press me for granting this wish" (Kathopanishad).

Nachiketa insists on knowing, and, although Yama offers him all the riches of the world and a long life, Nachiketa would only have this knowledge, since the fulfillment of desires and life are transient whereas the boy seeks immortality.

In enlightening Nachiketa, the god of death is certainly more audacious than the Buddha, who was often asked whether he would survive after death or whether he would not. The Buddha had refused to answer this question, responding that to say that he continued to exist would give rise to one kind of misunderstanding while to deny it would lead to others.

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Any assignment of meaning to earthly existence and to notions of worldly and otherworldly salvation rests on that deepest and most fundamental uncertainty of our human existence: the awareness of our mortality. How can stories like those of Godfather Death or Nachiketa, how can literature and the arts in general help us cope with this knowledge of death? An international conference was held in New Delhi, India, in February 2014, to give answers to these questions. The concept of the conference was drawn up by Günter Blamberger and Sudhir Kakar at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Cologne, Germany. The telling name

of this center is "Morphomata," an ancient Greek word for forming aesthetic ideas in works of arts, literature, and media. To explore aesthetic ideas in all their national and cultural diversity is the main focus of inquiry at the Morphomata Center. The present volume reflects upon the core concerns of Morphomata as a place of global reflexivity and cultural comparison, gathering international scholars from different disciplines in the humanities, organizing conferences on aesthetic ideas or cultural figurations and their impact at the University of Cologne and at research centers all over the world. This volume explores images of afterlife/ afterdeath and the presence of the dead in the imaginations of the living in Indian and Western traditions. It does so by concentrating on case studies in contemporary literature and arts which have tended not only to expand but also to transcend the realm of experience, to represent the unrepresentable, to advance into areas beyond all rational analysis, beyond the borderline at which philosophical or scientific explanations may fail, the borderline of death and the beyond.

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Illusions of Immortality by Jonardon Ganeri

Whenever I direct my attention to some place in my visual field, for instance, I am consciously aware of what is there. So it seems as if there must be something I am visually aware or conscious of even when I am not directing my attention there. But this could just be an illusion, and what we should say is that the very act of casting one's attention, like the opening of a fridge door, is what turns the light of consciousness on. Julian Jaynes put it like this:

> Consciousness is a much smaller part of our mental life than we are conscious of, because we cannot be conscious of what we are not conscious of. [...] It is like asking a flashlight in a dark room to search around for something that doesn't have any light shining on it. The flashlight, since there is light in whatever direction it turns, would have to conclude that there is light everywhere. And so consciousness can seem to pervade all mentality when actually it does not.

I think that this same type of illusion is what explains the grip of the idea of immortality. Throughout one's lifetime one is aware of being alive, and so it seems as if one is always alive, even when, at the moment of death, the door of life is closed. You think the light of life is always shining; i.e., that you are immortal. Yet this is to forget that it is living which turns on the light of life. From the fact that for as long as we are alive we are conscious of being so, it does not follow that there is a similar consciousness even when we are no longer alive.

In this essay I will look at responses to the illusion of immortality in two thinkers widely separated in time

and space: the fifth century Theravāda Buddhist philosopher, Buddhaghosa, and the twenteith century Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. We will see some profound and surprising affinities between these two thinkers, and I will suggest that each can be read in a way that helps to illuminate the thought of the other.

Buddhaghosa on Death Experience and Attention to One's Life in Total

We know very little about the life of Buddhaghosa, other than that he left India for Sri Lanka, where he studied the Sinhala commentaries on the Tripitaka in the monasteries of Anurādhāpura. Legend has it that he was bom a brahman, and in his youth traveled extensively and took part in philosophical debates. In Sri Lanka he systematized the Theravāda Abhidhamma, and wrote his masterpiece, the Path of Purification, or Visuddhi-magga, in Pali. From this work we can learn if little about his life then much about his views on death. Death, says Buddhaghosa, is a sort of "putting down" (nikkhepanamti). Its distinctive characteristic is to be a "falling" (cavanatta). The task performed by death, its task in the overall economy of a conscious existence, is to disjoin, that is to break down the psycho-physical complex: "Only constructing activities break up; their breakup is death; there is nothing else at all". The way death shows up, the way it is made manifest, is as an absence. If there were such a thing as the autonomous self, it could actively exert its agency in holding the psyche together, but there is no such self, and "no one has any power over arisen constructing activities [which] are devoid of the possibility of any power being exercised over them; they are non-self because, void, because ownerless, because unsusceptible to the wielding of power, and because of precluding a self". For, as is the standard view, "Here in this world there is no self that is something other than and apart from the aggregates", and "When any ascetics or Brahmans whatever see self in its various forms, they all of them see the five aggregates, or one of them".

This alleged incapacity of any putative self to prevent the disjunction of a psychology looks at first as if it is in tension with something else

Buddhaghosa says. He quotes an ancient saying, that

> Aggregates cease and nothing else exists;
> Breakup of aggregates is known as death.
> He watches their destruction steadfastly,
> As one who with a diamond drills a gem.

Does this not entail that one does have agency here after all, not indeed to hold one's mind together, but actively to destroy it? That is how Simone Weil took the point when she used a very similar metaphor, declaring that one should smash one's self as if using a hammer to strike a nail with all the force one can muster, a nail whose tip rests on the self. "To say `I' is to lie," Weil said, meaning not merely that it is an illusion, but that it is an act of deception that must actively be destroyed. Buddhaghosa's commentator, however, explains that the point here is about how one trains one's attention on death, not about bringing one's death about: "As a skilled man drilling a gem with a tool watches and keeps in mind only the hole he is drilling, not the gem's colour, etc., so too the meditator wisely keeps in mind only the ceaseless dissolution of constructing activity, not the constructing activities". So one focuses one's attention, like a spotlight, on the activity of dissolution, foregrounding it in one's field of vision and ignoring all else. This attention, however, does not bring about the dissolution of self, contra Weil. What it does is to shape one's consciousness of the moment of death. Buddhaghosa says that a belief in immortality is the result of a confusion: "When he is confused about death, instead of taking death thus, `Death in every case is break-up of aggregates,' he figures that it is a [lasting] being that dies, that it is a [lasting] being's transmigration to another incarnation, and so on". Near the time of death there is a slowing down of the activity of working memory (javana), which runs for five instead of seven moments.

What are most remarkable in Buddhaghosa are his thoughts about the experience of death. For him, the very last moment of consciousness is an entirely unique mental state, unlike any other that has occurred in one's life until that point. Suppose that the way you shut the fridge door determines whether the light stays on or not. Then you should be careful how you shut the door; otherwise you

will waste a lot of electricity. Likewise with death; the final moment is crucial in the conservation of karma. The last moment of consciousness is the most important one in one's entire life. For Buddhaghosa this near-death experience, or rather the at-death experience, does have future consequences. For there is, at it were, a cognitive equivalent of momentum, and the impetus of one's cognitive life does not simply dissipate at the moment of death but has an impact on other, future, lives:

> An echo, or its like, supplies
> The figures here; connectedness
> By continuity denies
> Identity and otherness.

We have all been impacted on in this way, Buddhaghosa claims, because the very first moment of our conscious life was itself a recoil from the fallout of other, earlier, at-death experiences which preceded it. Here Buddhaghosa is clever in his choice of appropriate metaphors, avoiding any suggestion that any sort of personal identity over lives is involved:

> Here let the illustration of this consciousness be such things as an echo, a light, a seal impression, a looking-glass image [...] for just as an echo, a light, a seal impression, and a shadow have respectively sound, etc., as their cause and come into being without going elsewhere, so also is this consciousness.

An echo, a reflection, a shadow: what do all these things have in common? They are reverberations of something else, something which is their sufficient cause, but they are not identical to that other thing. So too the last moment of consciousness, the at-death experience, casts a shadow, causes an echo, is reflected, leaves its imprint, in the flows or masses of consciousness that are to follow but which are not oneself. One does not survive death, but one is responsible for the manner in which one dies. If death is a falling, it is important that the falling does not cause a splash. If life is like looking in the fridge, and death like the state of the fridge when nobody is looking, then one wants to makes sure that one closes the door properly so that the light inside goes out. Buddhaghosa brilliantly expresses the idea that our concern is not for our individual afterlife but for a collective afterlife, the life after us of future humanity.

Buddhaghosa claims that near-death experience takes one of three forms. It is either the memory of a past action that is of particular karmic significance (kamma); or it is the perception of an object that serves as the sign of such an action (kamma-nimitta); or it is the prospection of a future life-to-be (gati-nimitta). Gethin provides an excellent analysis of these three states. "What is being said," in the first case, "is that at the time of death a being may directly remember a past action, making the actual mental volition of that past action the object of the mind". Gethin suggests that "what seems to be envisaged, though the texts do not quite spell this out, is that this memory prompts a kind of reliving of the original action: one experiences again a wholesome or unwholesome state of mind." In the second case, "what is envisaged is that at the time of death some past sense-object associated with a particular past action comes before the mind (i.e. is remembered) and once more prompts a kind of reliving of the experience." Buddhaghosa's example is that of someone who had had a shrine built, which then appears to him. Finally, in the third case, a being may see where he or she is about to go; this kind of object is not regarded as some conceptual symbol of one's destiny but classified as a present sense-object perceived at the mind-door, in other words, it is truly an actual vision of the place one is headed for.

Thus, one either actually relives the morally most significant act of one's life, or one is presented with a sign pointing to that act, or else one anticipates being in a future state.

It is striking that these are all states of what Envel Tulving calls autonoetic consciousness, or, more colorfully, mental time travel. Mental time travel refers to the possibility that a first-person perspective be located at subjective times other than the personal present. The phrase was introduced by Tulving in the course of explaining a distinction between three modes of consciousness, which he called anoetic, noetic, and autonoetic. A person possesses autonoetic consciousness who "is capable of becoming aware of her own past as well as her own future; she is capable of mental time travel, roaming at will over what has happened as readily as over what might happen,

independently of physical laws that govern the universe". It is manifest in memory when one remembers a past happening as if one were experiencing it again, and in anticipation when one projects oneself into a future experience, for example by imagining what it will be like. Autonoetic consciousness is thus a capacity to be aware of oneself in one's own personal past or future: it is the name given to "the kind of consciousness that mediates an individual's awareness of his or her existence and identity in subjective time extending from the personal past through the present to the personal future". With regard to its role in episodic memory, Tulving has described it as a capacity to revisit earlier experience, "a unique awareness of re-experiencing here and now something that happened before, at another time and in another place", and also as a capacity for representation, one "that allows adult humans to mentally represent and to become aware of their protracted existence across subjective time". Tulving views autonoesis as the source of a proprietary phenomenology: "It provides the characteristic phenomenal flavour of the experience of remembering. [...] It is autonoetic consciousness that confers the special phenomenal flavour to the remembering of past events, the flavour that distinguishes remembering from other kinds of awareness, such as those characterizing perceiving, thinking, imagining, or dreaming".

William James put the idea in different words, saying that our reliving and preliving of past and future experience is distinguished by a sort of warmth and intimacy:

> A farther condition is required before the present image can be held to stand for a past original. That condition is that the fact imaged be expressly referred to the past, thought as in the past. [...] But even this would not be memory. Memory requires more than mere dating of a fact in the past. It must be dated in my past. In other words, I must think that I directly experienced its occurrence. It must have [...] "warmth and intimacy" [...].

As the very terminology implies, autonoesis is intended to identify a capacity to know or conceive of oneself in a special way, that is, as having a continuing existence in subjective time, reliving past experiences in their felt pastness and preliving or as-if-living future experiences in their felt futurity. When Tulving says that "organisms can behave and learn without (autonoetic) awareness, but they cannot remember without awareness", he has in mind the retrieval of past experiences as "personally experienced" (so that "episodic memory mediates the remembering of personally experienced events"). In remembering, one is aware of oneself as re-experiencing a past event.

Buddhaghosa's claim is that near-death experience is mental time travel, back to a significant past act or forward to an anticipated future condition. This sounds like an empirical claim, and we might wonder how well it bears up to empirical scrutiny. There have been various studies of reported near-death experience in Western patients. One, by Kenneth Ring, isolated ten recurring features: the awareness of being dead, positive emotions, out-of-body experiences, moving through a tunnel, communication with light, observation of colors, observation of a celestial landscape, meeting with deceased persons, experiencing a life review, and the presence of a border or a "point of no return". The psychiatrist Bruce Greyson went on to classify near-death experience according to four groups: (1) cognitive features (time distortion, thought acceleration, life review, revelation); (2) affective features (peace, joy, cosmic unity, encounter with light); (3) paranormal features (vivid sensory events, apparent extrasensory perception, precognitive visions, out-of-body experiences); and (4) transcendental features (sense of an "otherworldly" environment, sense of a mystical entity, sense of deceased/religious spirits, sense of border/"point of no return"). Needless to say, not every feature is present in every case. We can see that the features Buddhaghosa is interested in, as bearing on the overall moral impact of one's life, are the cognitive features, and he has emphasized life review and revelation.

This is both strong empirical confirmation of Buddhaghosa's claim, and a further indication of why he sees a relationship between near-death experience and our collective moral progress. Gethin sums up the overall view as follows:

Stripped of its technicalities, what this Abhidhamma account of what happens in the mind at the time of dying seems to be saying is this: the last consciousness process of a given life operates in principle as a kind of summing up of that life; whatever has been most significant in that life will tend to come before the mind. Moreover, what comes before the mind at this point is what will play the principal role in determining the nature of the subsequent rebirth. [...] So a being's bhavanga itself represents a kind of summing up of what he or she did in his or her previous life; in crude terms, it represents a kind of balance sheet carried over from the previous life detailing how one did.

This, though, makes it sound far too much as if there is some kind of personal identity in play, of just the sort Buddhaghosa is so careful to resist. I should rather put the idea as being that the ethical significance of near-death experience is that it projects the ethical balance sheet of each life into the future, where it leaves an imprint on or sounds like an echo in future psychological continua. At the precise moment of death, then, it seems that there is little one can do to change the course of events, but what one can do is to attend closely to the death experience itself.

Why does Buddhaghosa so closely associate near-death experience with autonoesis and so with a sense of self, or at least a sense of the subjectivity and inwardness of the experience? Perhaps because he recognizes that it is always and exclusively one's death that one experiences, that, as Heidegger famously put it, "Insofar as it 'is', death is always essentially my own". Thus, death experience too is a kind of attention: autonoetic attention to the totality of one's life as distilled into a moment of maximal significance to one, the condensation of one's life into that single moment with which one most fully identifies.

From a philosopher's perspective, Buddhaghosa's account raises some intriguing questions. Does it follow that all the less significant acts one performs have no subsequent moral impact? If so, then we have a very rarified form of act-consequentialism, in which just a single one from among all of one's past acts is of any ultimate moral importance.

What about the epistemology? Are near-death experiences veridical? If we feel inclined, as well we might be, to view the vision of future states as a kind of prospection, should we also think the same of the autonoetic memory of one's past deeds? In other words, how does one know that the life that flashes before one's eyes is indeed one's own? Again, how does near-death experience know which past action has the maximal moral significance? How does it make its selection? I cannot answer these fascinating philosophical questions here, and perhaps they are anyway tangential or irrelevant in an exploration of the significance that death holds for each of us from the first-person perspective. Instead I will turn to the second author I want to discuss, Fernando Pessoa.

Fernando Pessoa's Fiction of the Interlude

The seal impression, the echo, of Buddhaghosa's final moment of consciousness might well have left its imprint on the life-continuum of Fernando Pessoa. In his unfinished modernist anti-novel, The Book of Disquiet, Pessoa reflects and reflects again on the phenomenology of death and the afterlife:

> And then I wonder what this thing is that we call death. I don't mean the mystery of death, which I can't begin to fathom, but the physical sensation of ceasing to live. Humanity is afraid of death, but indecisively. The normal man [...] rarely looks with horror at the abyss of nothing [...]. And nothing is less worthy of a thinking man than to see death as a slumber. Why a slumber, if death doesn't resemble sleep? Basic to sleep is the fact that we wake up from it, as we presumably do not from death. [...] Death doesn't resemble slumber, I said, since in slumber one is alive and sleeping, and I don't know how death can resemble anything at all for us, since we have no experience of it, nor anything to compare it to.

Here we have the refrigerator light illusion again. To think of death as sleep is to imagine it as a state that continues although the door on life has been shut, and that, Pessoa exactly observes, is a mistake. We should not extrapolate in that way from the known to the unknown: "We generally colour our ideas of the unknown with our notions of

the known. If we call death a sleep, it's because it seems like a sleep on the outside; if we call death a new life, it's because it seems like something different from life".

As for the phenomenology of dying, Buddhaghosa has already answered Pessoa's question, for he has told us that it feels like traveling in mental time to another place, past or future. Buddhaghosa, recall, says that the way death manifests itself is as absence, and Pessoa brilliantly expands on the theme: "Whoever lives like me doesn't die: he terminates, wilts, devegetates. The place where he was remains without him being there; the street where he walked remains without him being seen on it; the house where he lived is inhabited by not-him. That's all, and we call it nothing [...]". This then is how to imagine the afterlife: we imagine the world exactly as we know it, but airbrush ourselves out of the picture. There is an imagined absence in the imagined scene, and that is what it is to imagine one's nonexistence, rather than a blackness or a dream, or any other state in which some semblance of subjectivity or first-personal perspective is maintained. To imagine being dead is to imagine the world from what Thomas Nagel famously called "the view from nowhere". And thus immortality really is an illusion. As Pessoa puts it, "How vain is all our striving to create, under the spell of the illusion of not dying!".

There is, though, another thought in Pessoa, and a more complicated one. It is the idea that in death we are more real than we are in life. It is not death that should be likened to sleep but life itself: "What we call life is the slumber of our real life, the death of what we really are. [...] We're dead when we think we're living; we start living when we die". Pessoa recognizes, and even embraces, the paradox and absurdity of the thought: "I've always felt that virtue lay in obtaining what was out of one's reach, in living where one isn't, in being more alive after death than during life, in achieving something impossible, something absurd, in overcoming—like an obstacle—the world's very reality".

The impossible act is to imagine one's life as an "interlude" between one death and another: "Life is thus an interval, a link, a relation, but a relation

between what has passed and what will pass, a dead interval between Death and Death". "Whatever be this interlude played out under the spotlight of the sun and the spangles of the stars, surely there's no harm in knowing it's an interlude". "[M]y salvation lay in interspaces of unconsciousness". Pessoa offers us one clue as to what he means in saying that death is more real than life. It has to do with the fact already noted, that death is a "view from nowhere":

> Since every noble soul desires to live life in its entirety—experiencing all things, all places and all feelings—and since this is objectively impossible, the only way for a noble soul to live life is subjectively; only by denying life can it be lived in its totality.
> To visualise the inconceivable in dreams is one of the great triumphs that I, as advanced a dreamer as I am, only rarely attain. To dream, for example, that I'm simultaneously, separately, severally the man and the woman on a stroll that a man and a woman are taking along the river. [...] How absurd this seems! But everything is absurd, and dreaming least of all.
> The highest ideal in life is to experience everything from every point of view, which is in effect to inhabit simultaneously every subjective existence. That is impossible, and the next best thing is not to experience anything at all, since what the two states have in common is the refusal to be imprisoned within a single subjective stance.
> Forced to occupy a single first-person perspective, we are as if imprisoned on the surface of life, hoping for an immortality that lies in seeing the world without ourselves in it.

This thought might help us to understand better something in Buddhaghosa. Consciousness rises and falls like a sine wave, in his view, lapsing into intermediate states of bhavaṅga, and the purpose of each wave of consciousness is to shift attention from one object to another. The purpose of an entire life is analogous, its function to shift the summary or balance sheet that is held in the life-continuum, the bhavaṅga, from one to another. So a life is framed by two death experiences, and indeed its sole moral function is to effect a change

in their contents. Cessation, nirvāna, is the dissipation of this process and that is what, for Buddhaghosa, counts as the highest ideal in life. Unlike Buddhaghosa though, Pessoa understands that this is an impossible ideal, and indeed its very impossibility is what makes it, for him, worthwhile.

What the illusion with which I began reveals is that it is a mistake to think we know something about those regions of our mind to which we do not actively attend, based on merely an extrapolation from our attentive states; just as it is a mistake to think we can know the state of the unseen light from its state when we actively attend to it. One of the most recurring themes in Pessoa is that we must show some respect for the unknowable, for it is the framing narrative that makes the more mundane narrative of our actual lives, consisting in what is indeed known, experienced, or seen, have meaning. We do not know "what is beyond the theatre doors", whether it is even life or death. This is the source of the absurdity of life: our impossible .desire to know what we know to be unknowable: "Let's absurdify life, from east to west", he says. For Pessoa, the endeavor to be conscious of unconsciousness is absurd:

> The consciousness of life's unconsciousness is the oldest tax levied on the intelligence. That's all, and we call it nothing; but not even this tragedy of negation can be staged to applause, for we don't even know for sure if it's nothing [...]. Let us affirm—and grasp, which would be impossible—that we are conscious of not being conscious, and that we are not what we are.
> Of these absurd attempts to be conscious of that of which one is, by definition, not conscious, and whose absurdity one fully understands, the attempts to imagine the afterlife and to imagine being all subjectivity at once are the supreme examples. Yet it is just this absurdity which manifests itself in the very character of our longings, which are, Pessoa says, "half-tones of the soul's consciousness":
> The feelings that hurt most, the emotions that sting most, are those that are absurd: the longing for impossible things, precisely because they are impossible [...]. All these half-tones of the soul's consciousness create

in us a painful landscape, an eternal sunset of what we are. To realize a dream, one must forget it, tearing away his attention from it. To realize is thus to not realize. Life is full of paradoxes, as roses are of thorns.

So the strange, dream-like quality of the lives we lead, and their inherent absurdity, comes about as a result of our incessant longing, as it were, to attend to the unattended region in the visual field, to see it as unattended, to render central the peripherality of vision. We know we can only do this precisely by not directing our attention there, and so the only way to realize our longing is by noting the tangential and ethereal effects it has on what is held in view. The stage is the place on which attention falls, but what we dream of is the interlude. Exactly so too with our desire to know the afterlife, something in principle unknowable because defined as the absence of our consciousness. This absurd longing shows up instead in "the half-tones of the soul's consciousness" while we are alive, and is the source of our most intense emotions.

This is perhaps as near as Pessoa gets to Buddhaghosa's concept of bhavañga, the echoes of past balance sheets that reverberate in present lives. For Buddhaghosa too this is a fiction of the interlude, for his opinion was that our minds revert back to a glimpse of those echoes in between every two distinct moments of attentive consciousness. They are the unattended default state, the baseline from which consciousness arises and to which it again falls back. They are the seal imprints of past deaths that haunt our present lives.

I wondered earlier why it was that the phenomenology of dying, the experience of death, should be that of an autonoesis or temporal subjectivity, a flying off in mental time to another time and place, something that is especially puzzling because the idea of autonoetic consciousness seems to bring with it a sense of self as identical over time. Here again I think Pessoa comes to Buddhaghosa's aid. He is commenting on something I'm sure we have all experienced, coming across some of our old writings and reading them with a dreadful sense of alienation and familiarity:

> In this case there's something besides the flow of personality between its own banks: there's an absolute other, an extraneous self that was me. [...1 It's as if I'd found an old picture that I know is of me, with a different height and with features I don't recognize, but that is undoubtedly me, terrifyingly I.

I do not recognize myself at such times, in the sense of using some features of the presented self in order to identify it as me. Indeed, I barely acknowledge myself in those old writings at all. And yet I know that it is me, and the combination of absolute familiarity and total alienation is indeed terrifying. I wonder if this could be the autonoesis of death experience, at once a summing up of one's moral debt, done from the inside and wholly first-personally, and at the same time a taste of alienation, of distancing, of knowing that whatever it was or will be, it is no longer I. I relive the past but relive it with a sense that I am already traveling in foreign lands. This is the way the afterlife has an effect on the living, because, as Pessoa says,

> sometimes the best way to see an object is to delete it, because it subsists in a way I can't quite explain, consisting of the substance of its negation and deletion; this is what I do with vast areas of my real-life being, which, after they're deleted from my picture of myself, transfigure my true being, the one that's real for me.   <>

[Syria, the Strength of an Idea: The Constitutional Architectures of Its Political Regimes](#) by Karim Atassi, preface by Jean Marcou, translated from the French by Christopher Sutcliffe [Cambridge University Press, 9781316635018]

The Syrian crisis has confounded political leaders and experts who forecast a rapid fall of the regime. This monumental error of interpretation has had tragic consequences for the unfolding of the crisis and its slide into a frightful civil war with regional and international ramifications. This book looks at Syrian reality in a new light. By analysing twenty-five constitutions and constitutional texts and proposing an innovative classification of the different political regimes that have shaped Syria over the last one hundred years, the author

retraces the country's intense history and the persistence of a Syrian model defined by the Founding Fathers. If, on emerging from this war, Syria maintains its unity and gives itself a democratic regime reflecting its society, then the concept of Syria may find a new lease of life and Syria will once again be perceived as an idea full of promises.

Excerpt: The publication of Karim Atassi's work on Syrian constitutions, which was the subject of a PhD thesis in public law (December 2012) that I had the pleasure of supervising at Grenoble University (France), is a very welcome event. When this research was first undertaken, Syria, long isolated and little known, appeared in many ways to be totally left out of the transformations of the contemporary world. When Karim Atassi completed his work in 2012, Syria was unfortunately headline news, with the uprising against the backdrop of the Arab Spring having changed into a frightful civil war that is emptying the country of its population and threatening its very existence.

Given this context, readers opening this book might think that taking an interest today in the Syrian constitutional question is somewhat anachronistic, not to say derisory. Yet, both for those simply seeking to understand the current Syrian crisis a little better and for specialists and experts trying to come up with a solution to it, Karim Atassi's book will be a valuable reference work. For this work, far from being a positivistic exegesis of Syrian constitutional texts, deals, through its analysis of them, with the construction of the Syrian state and results in a decoding of the latest events. What the author tells us of is ultimately the failure of constitutionalism in the country despite some considerable endeavours, especially when Hashim Atassi was active. Through both observation of the increasingly intense involvement of the army in the Syrian political system and analysis of the transformations of the Ba'th party, Karim Atassi shows how an authoritarian regime builds itself up and veers away from a constitutionalist project. Drawing on Ibn Khaldun's theory of the state and the brilliant analysis of it by the late Michel Seurat, he underscores the social dimension of the failure of the various Syrian regimes, liberal and authoritarian alike.

[Syria, the Strength of an Idea: The Constitutional Architectures of Its Political Regimes](#) has the merit of addressing a subject that is truly novel. No work to date, whether in French, English, or Arabic, has covered all of Syria's constitutions. In this respect, Karim Atassi's developments soon take readers beyond any idées reçues that assume somewhat hastily that a country like Syria can do without a constitutional architecture and the complex procedures that it necessarily generates. The author has examined seven permanent and five provisional constitutions, three constitutional arrangements, and four draft constitutions. The bold undertaking shows that even a state in which constitutional power has largely failed can produce a substantial constitutional literature of interest for research.

The author is impressive in his ability to provide readers with keys to interpreting such complexity, because it was not easy to become immersed in so many texts and unravel their storyline. Very methodically, by writing a preliminary chapter on the Syrian question and tying the country's constitutional inconsistency to the difficulties inherent in its existence, Karim Atassi comes up with an astute means to set the scene for the successive Syrian constitutional documents. He then manages to come up with a complete and finally very understandable synthesis of Syrian constitutional history through a meaningful categorization (liberal and authoritarian constitutions) that avoids a purely chronological account and makes it easier to identify and analyse the various texts. Far from drawing on second-hand sources, the study is based on meticulous and comprehensive spadework involving the original texts. This is what makes it so valuable. Through the excerpts of this constitutional literature that the author systematically puts into context, readers discover the key moments in the construction of the Syrian state, its leading actors, its major challenges, its accomplishments, and its missed opportunities. This journey to the heart of the country's constitutional writings provides an opportunity to revisit Syrian political history in a particularly thorough and above all novel way.

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Syria has been headline news since March 2011, yet, because it has not been readily accessible for half a century and is therefore poorly understood, it is still a mysterious and enthralling country. Although much has been written about Syria, its centres of power and decision-making processes remain opaque to foreign observers. Is Syria run by the military or civilians? Is it a republican or a hereditary regime? Are its politics right- or left-wing? Is it really a minority regime? Is it supported by the majority? There are no easy answers to any of these questions.

Syria's remote and recent history has been described in the most eloquent of terms. Ancient Syria is often described as the crucible of civilizations, the cradle of religions, the crossroads of three continents. Ancient Syria's contribution to the advancement of humankind is immense and includes the invention of both the alphabet and algebra. Syria has had a glorious history since ancient times. It saw the first city states and the first empires. Syria has been Hittite, Egyptian, Aramean, Assyrian, Persian, Babylonian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Seljuk, and Ottoman. Omeyyad Syria stretched all the way to Andalusia. Saladin's Syria fought the Crusaders and liberated Jerusalem and Palestine. Baibars' Ayyubid Syria became Mamluk, then Ottoman, and then the modern Syria that Egyptian President Nasser, in his customary flights of oratory, called its capital, Damascus, 'the pounding heart of Arabism'

The term Syria has always been geographically indeterminate from the time of Ancient Syria until the time of Levantine Syria encompassing present-day Lebanon, Palestine/Israel, Jordan, Syria, and certain Turkish territories. Ever since the Arab provinces were wrested from the Ottoman Empire in 1918, many have expounded their views about what Syria should or should not be as a political entity. These are sore points that leave no one indifferent in the Near East, where most of the borders are contested. This is not the place for value judgments about diverging opinions as to the geographical extent of Syria. What is important labout modern Syria is not its spatial extent. What sets it apart from the region's other political entities is not its geographical size but the very idea of Syria: a generous and embracing idea in a region

often characterized by sectarianism and exclusion; an idea that rallies and integrates without assimilating, in a region that is split and tending to disintegrate.

Syrians themselves know little about their own constitutions.' Precious little has been written about them. Even the rare specialists and academics seem to have given up on constitutional law. Sadly, even the constitutional law textbook recently used to teach at Damascus University devotes just 30 of its 721 pages to Syria's constitutions. The previous textbook had just 56 out of 603 pages on Syrian constitutions.' Regrettably, then, a part of the country's rich history is deliberately blacked out, condemned to oblivion, and concealed.

This book has been written in part to try to fill this gap. It is a combined study of Syria's constitutions and the political regimes they underpinned. It encompasses the history and analysis of the political regimes, their constitutions, electoral laws, and laws on political parties. The task is a complex one. Not so much because of any intrinsic difficulty in the sub¬ject matter but because of the profusion of constitutional texts. I examine twenty-five constitutional texts drafted in less than a century. They include seven permanent constitutions (1920, 1928, 1950, 1953, 1962, 1973, 2012), five provisional constitutions (1949, 1961, 1964, 1969, 1971), three pan-Arab constitutions (1958, 1963, 1971), three constitutional arrangements (1949, 1951, 1966), and seven draft constitutions (1949, 2006, 2011, 2012, 2016 (2), 2017). This multitude of constitutional texts reflects the country's intense political history.

Few of these texts had been translated so most of the research has been done using Arabic sources. For want of textbooks on Syrian constitutional law or comparative studies of Syrian constitutions, my research into the historical circumstances peculiar to each of the constitutions was based on manuscripts in Arabic by the actors of the time. Some periods were better covered than others. I also took advantage of my stays in Damascus to interview prime witnesses and actors in Syrian political life over the last fifty years.

Understanding constitutional texts requires knowledge of their causes, origins, and purposes.

Each of the texts relates to a particular political regime that ruled the country. Those regimes were as different as can be (monarchic and republican, liberal and authoritarian, right- and left-wing, military and civilian, unionist and sovereignist). Yet despite this diversity, all Syrian regimes for close to a hundred years shared the same values in the shape of a national project outlined by the Founding Fathers of modern Syria in a crucial but often overlooked document, the Damascus Programme, given by the Syrian congress to the King—Crane commission, which was despatched by US President Woodrow Wilson in 1919 on behalf of the Peace Conference to enquire into the wishes of the Eastern populations previously part of the Ottoman empire.

The Syrian congress claimed to represent the aspirations of the `Syrian' population in the former Ottoman provinces that included not just present-day Syria but also Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine/Israel, and certain Turkish territories. All the successive political regimes, all the constitutions, and virtually all the draft constitutions were fully in keeping with this spirit and in one way or another took up the main points of the national project. These points can be summarized as the coexistence of all the component parts of Syrian society in the form of a Syrian secularism, the refusal of the partitioning of Syrian geographical space, the refusal of any foreign hegemony, and the dismissal of Zionist ambitions for Palestine. All Syrian national and regional policies were developed within this general framework with variations on the theme depending on the period and circumstances. Two further consensus-based items were subsequently added to these four initial points of the Syrian national project, namely social justice and then individual and collective liberties.

The original points developed in the Damascus Programme shaped the values and principles to which generations of Syrians to come were attached. These themes are the unchanging component underpinning all the political contingencies and all the regimes and their legitimizing constitutional texts. The permanence of these themes reflects the fact that, wittingly or not, Syrians have the impression that the national project remains unfinished to this day, preventing

the foundation of a full-fledged modern state and focusing Syrians' attention on the container instead of its contents. It has weakened all rulers and promoted forms of power that are antagonistic by nature to the concepts of state and citizenship and not dissimilar to what Ibn Khaldun described in the fourteenth century.

Syria's constitutions and political regimes should first be examined in the context of the Syrian Question and the Founding Fathers' national project because the first constitutions were drafted to address them and not to regulate the executive and legislative branches of power. The earliest reference to any intention to create a constitutional form of power dates from 5 October 1918, just two days after Emir Faysal's triumphal entry into Damascus following the departure of Ottoman troops. On that day, Faysal declared in the name of his father, Sharif Hussein, that he was establishing an independent constitutional government for all Syrian territories, which would respect the rights of minorities. Faysal added that the government would abide by the principles of justice and equality and would treat all Arabs the same regardless of their religion or sectarian origin and would not discriminate in law between Muslims, Christians, and Jews. It was a remarkable declaration in many respects, for from the outset Faysal declared his intention to create a non-despotic, non-religious, civil constitutional state that would promote multi-sectarian coexistence.

This declaration was taken up and developed in the Damascus Programme prepared by the Syrian congress in July 1919 and given to the King-Crane commission, which was officially mandated by the Peace Conference but in fact comprised exclusively US delegates despatched by President Wilson. It was for the Peace Conference again that, after declaring Syria's independence and proclaiming Faysal King of Syria, the Syrian congress drafted the 1920 monarchical constitution. The point of the exercise was not to regulate power between the executive (king, government) and the legislature but to force the hand of the Peace Conference and present it with a fait accompli - the independence of Syria, the proclamation of a king, and the adoption of a modern secular constitution.

The manoeuvre was miscalculated and failed tragically. The Syrian nationalists were irredentist and unrealistic; colonial France was intransigent and blind. The outcome was pitiful. Syrian nationalism and French colonial tutelage in the form of a mandate were to be at loggerheads for a quarter of a century. Against this background the second - republican and not monarchic - Syrian constitution was drafted in 1928. Republican France could not spawn a monarchy. Again the purpose of the constitution was not to balance executive and legislative powers. For Syrians its purpose was to express their refusal to the carving up of their country and their rejection of the French mandate. Under the mandate charter granted by the League of Nations in 1922, France had to bestow on Syria an organic law (constitution) in agreement with the population within three years, that is by 1925. The policy by which France sliced up Syrian geography (into the State of Damascus, State of Aleppo, Greater Lebanon, the Alawite State, and Druze Territory) and then reshaped it (Syrian Federation in 1922, State of Syria in 1925) and the Great Revolt of 1925 had strained relations between French representatives and the Syrian population. This constant strain had prevented any constitution being written and adopted within the time frame set by the international organization. It was not until 1930 that the 1928 constitution, revised and corrected by the high commissioner, was submitted to the League of Nations.

The 1928 constitution was an instrument in the fight against the French mandate. The institutions it created (parliament, government, presidency) led the struggle for independence and the reunification of the Syrian territories. In this, the 1928 constitution kept all its promises. It was after independence that its shortcomings began to show. The flaws lay not so much in the actual text of the constitution and its mechanisms, but rather in the lack of vision of the political class, which was incapable of identifying the challenges and setting the priorities for national action. The political class gave the disastrous impression that it was just looking after itself and its privileges and disregarding the most pressing social needs of a young and largely rural population.

Against this backdrop, the army decided to overthrow the regime and seize power in March 1949. This frightful year for Syria saw three coups d'état by the armed forces. The military had entered the political arena, where it has remained, save for the period between 1954 and 1956 when it was confined to barracks and left power to the civilian authorities. When civilian rule was restored with the second coup d'état in August 1949, the political class called almost unanimously for a new constitution. A constituent assembly was elected and bestowed a provisional constitution on Syria that took up the provisions of the previous constitution on constituted powers. Then a second republican constitution was adopted in 1950 and remained in force until 1962, with two interruptions. The first of these was between 1951 and 1954 further to the coup d'état by Colonel Shishakli setting up a military republic and then a presidential regime. The second interruption was from 1958 to 1961 during the union between Syria and Egypt that gave rise to the United Arab Republic. The end of the union brought a return to the main provisions of the 1950 constitution in the form of a provisional constitution, before a new constitution was adopted in particularly testing circumstances in September 1962.

The 1950 constitution remains the only Syrian constitution that actually sought primarily to regulate and limit the exercise of power beginning with executive power. The intention was laudable but the context hardly conducive. The country had just experienced three coups d'état in less than a year and the army, like the constituent assembly, overtly claimed to represent the will of the people. Under the circumstances, it was probably unwise to weaken the executive, which ought instead to have been strengthened so that it could fully assume its role and resist the demands of the military. This was not the way the constituent assembly chose to go in 1950. This was an error of judgment, yet, even so, this constitution still has its supporters who call for it to be re-enacted.

The 1950 constitution should be credited with attempting to put social issues and especially the agrarian question at the heart of the Syrian political system. But the governments of the time made no effort to implement the generous social

provisions in the constitutional programme, thereby giving the impression that no social advance, no meaningful reform could be made without a violent shift in the established political and social order, in other words, without regime change. The insensitivity of the traditional political class to the social question led in 1962 to the fall of the last liberal assembly that had been democratically elected in 1961. Instead of amending the `socialist' laws (agrarian reform, nationalizations) enacted during the union with Egypt, it purely and simply rescinded them. The 1962 constitution was adopted in these highly dramatic circumstances. It took up virtually all of the provisions of the previous constitution. Its article 59, however, granted the president the power to govern by decree, whereas the 1950 version of that same article had formally prohibited this. It was a derisory constitutional disguise for a political reality that completely escaped the civilian authorities despite the full powers granted to the executive. Independent, Ba'thist, and Nasserist officers met with no resistance to their coup d'état on 8 March 1963.

The coming to power of the Ba'th turned the page in the history of a liberal, pluralistic, and parliamentary Syria and ushered in an era of authoritarian, presidential, monolithic regimes of the popular democracy type found in eastern Europe in Cold War times. The notorious exceptions to the previous liberal period were the brief interlude of General Husni Al-Zaim in 1949 and the regime established by Colonel Shishakli between 1951 and 1954, the forerunner of all Arab military regimes and especially those of Nasser in Egypt and Qassem in Iraq. Regime change in Syria was naturally mirrored in the constitutional texts, all of which became authoritarian. The first period of Ba'th rule was that of a supposedly collegiate leadership among comrades. This did not preclude a relentless struggle for power among the various clans, each with its ramifications within the party and the army.

It was not a foregone conclusion that the Ba'th would engage in constitutional window dressing. The Ba'th was a left-wing reformist type of political movement and the proponent of liberal, parliamentary, representative democracy. Its party constitution, its ideology, and its

parliamentary history attested to this. It was mostly the Syrian Communist Party renegades who joined the Ba'th when it came to power who gave it a Marxist-leaning ideological line legitimizing an authoritarian regime. This ideological turn-around came at the Sixth National Congress in October 1963 and was reflected in a `A Few Theoretical Foundations, the publication that heralded the constitutional window dressing to come.

The first two constitutional texts under the Ba'th - the 1964 provisional constitution and the constitutional arrangement of February 1966 after the neo-Ba'th came to power - both reflected the collegiate aspect of their rule. The 1969 provisional constitution was to maintain that collegiality. Although never really applied, that constitution was still the parent of all the ensuing Ba'thist constitutions. The next two, the 1971 provisional constitution and the 1973 constitution were tailor-made for Hafez Assad. The first restored the office of president of the republic instead of the 1969 provisional constitution's head of state. This was a harbinger of the personalization of the regime reflected in the next constitution, which bestowed the widest-ranging powers any Syrian president had ever enjoyed. This constitution brought stability not so much because of the strength of the institutions it put in place or the mechanisms governing relations among them but because of the strength of the regime. That stability was based on the army, the intelligence services, the party, and a bold but cautious regional policy. Moreover, Hafez Assad's regime developed and maintained a broad social base through an informal social compact.

Some of the crucial factors behind that earlier stability vanished under Bashar Assad. On coming to power, the young president announced his intention to make reforms, but the leadership had no ideological foundation for doing so. All the partial reforms initiated (regarding the economy, public sector, and administration) were ultimately attempts to modernize what had become an obsolete system. A return to the ideas of the Founding Fathers of the Ba'th before 1963 could have provided an ideological basis and a general framework for change. That ideological basis could have combined economic and political reforms. An

opening up of the economy to the private sector should have been accompanied by an opening up of politics to the opposition. The opportunity for such change came - and went - with the Ba'th Tenth Congress of 2005 at which the party adopted the principle of a `social market economy' but with no political outreach and it clung to its comfortable role as the party that ran the state and society under the terms of the 1973 constitution. That constitution had enshrined the Ba'th trilogy (Union-Freedom-Socialism) and had integrated it into the constitutional text. What had initially been simply a partisan slogan acquired constitutional standing. The Ba'th trilogy was variously interpreted before and during Ba'th rule. Each of these interpretations reflected the orientations of the time. The latest interpretation was that of the Ba'th Tenth Congress, which modified the concept of `socialism' without changing the idea of `freedom, which remained confined to an outmoded meaning of the popular democracy type.

This failing was to have tragic consequences when crisis broke out in March 2011. The regime was distraught and ideologically disarmed when confronted with legitimate demands for political reform. Intellectually, the authorities were not ready for dialogue, concessions, or compromise. It would have meant discarding the dogma in which it had been steeped since 1963. Accordingly, laws inspired in principle by liberal thinking — on peaceful protest, political parties, the press, and a new electoral law — were rushed through with virtually no discussion. But those laws proved highly restrictive, and the changes made since the outset of the crisis amounted to continuity.

In February 2012 a new constitution introduced a multi-party regime and the election of the president by universal suffrage. It also introduced a control over the constitutionality of law by enabling citizens to file objections, the starting point of constitutionalism. However, it failed to meet the expectations of those hoping for an emancipated parliament and a shift in the balance of power between executive and legislature. Despite some irrefutable advances, it is likely that this will be no more than a transitional constitution which, when the time comes, will be superseded by another constitutional text to end the crisis.

Describing Syrian constitutions and political regimes chronologically is only a first step towards understanding them. They still have to be classified, analysed, and their internal architecture examined. The classification used here is inspired by the traditional ordering of political regimes in France: the monarchy followed by a chronological ordering of republican regimes. Such a classification proved feasible as Syria experienced a monarchical constitution followed by several republican constitutions. I have therefore called the 1920 constitution and the Faysal period from his entering Damascus in 1918 the Syrian Monarchy (Chapter 2); the 1928 constitution and the regime it established the First Republic (Chapter 3); and the 1950 constitution and its regime the Second Republic (Chapter 4). I have included the 1962 constitution in the Second Republic because it is virtually a copy of the 1950 constitution. I have called the 1953 constitution and its presidential-style regime the Third Republic (Chapter 5); the Bath constitutions (1964, 1969, 1971, and 1973) and their regimes the Fourth Republic (Chapter 6). I have inserted a separate chapter on the pan-Arab constitutions to which Syria adhered (Chapter 7). I have termed the 2012 constitution and the present-day regime in Syria the Fifth Republic (Chapter 8). I have ended by analysing the dynamics for the establishment of the Sixth Republic (Chapter 9).

The structure of the book reflects the history of Syrian political regimes, namely liberal parliamentary regimes and authoritarian presidential regimes. There is obviously no necessity for a presidential-style regime to be authoritarian, but that is how things have been in Syria. I therefore address the parliamentary constitutions and liberal regimes in Part I. This includes the Syrian Monarchy and the First and Second Republics. I cover the presidential-style constitutions and authoritarian regimes in Part II. This includes the Third and Fourth Republics, a brief chapter on the pan-Arab constitutions, then the Fifth Republic and the march towards the Sixth Republic. To introduce the subject, I have thought it necessary to begin with a first chapter on the Syrian Question since the early nineteenth century by including it in the context of the Eastern Question more generally.

The events that have shaken Syria since March 2011 are evoked in Chapters 8 and 9 and in the conclusion. I deplore the loss of human lives in both camps, just as I deplore the militarization of the crisis by the protagonists. It is true that the Syrian political system was sclerotic, obsolete, authoritarian, and required far-reaching reforms. But did that justify a civil war that may well, albeit inadvertently, bring an end to the national project of the Founding Fathers? What Syria needed was not a war but a gradual, well-thought-out process of political development that could preserve its national unity and the idea of Syria. Unless, of course, the hidden agenda in the war is to put an end to the national project of the Founding Fathers and perhaps to the very existence of a Syria that has often proved rebellious. A Near East without Syria would be a terrible step backwards for everyone without exception. Despite its imperfections, the Syrian model has proved to be a stabilizing force, protective of minorities, and an antidote to the region's disintegration. A regional order without Syria would give free rein to primal instincts and sectarian exclusions.

In this sense, Syria remains more than ever an ideal to be attained and a forward-looking idea. <>

Islam in Pakistan: A History by Muhammad Qasim Zaman [Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics, Princeton University Press, 9780691149226]

 The first book to explore the modern history of Islam in South Asia
The first modern state to be founded in the name of Islam, Pakistan was the largest Muslim country in the world at the time of its establishment in 1947. Today it is the second-most populous, after Indonesia. Islam in Pakistan is the first comprehensive book to explore Islam's evolution in this region over the past century and a half, from the British colonial era to the present day. Muhammad Qasim Zaman presents a rich historical account of this major Muslim nation, insights into the rise and gradual decline of Islamic modernist thought in the South Asian region, and an understanding of how Islam has fared in the contemporary world.

Much attention has been given to Pakistan's role in sustaining the Afghan struggle against the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, in the growth of the Taliban in the 1990s, and in the War on Terror after 9/11. But as Zaman shows, the nation's significance in matters relating to Islam has much deeper roots. Since the late nineteenth century, South Asia has witnessed important initiatives toward rethinking core Islamic texts and traditions in the interest of their compatibility with the imperatives of modern life. Traditionalist scholars and their institutions, too, have had a prominent presence in the region, as have Islamism and Sufism. Pakistan did not merely inherit these and other aspects of Islam. Rather, it has been and remains a site of intense contestation over Islam's public place, meaning, and interpretation.

Examining how facets of Islam have been pivotal in Pakistani history, Islam in Pakistan offers sweeping perspectives on what constitutes an Islamic state.

Islam in Pakistan: A History is concerned with the history of, and the contestations on, Islam in colonial India and Pakistan. The first modern Muslim state to be established in the name of Islam, Pakistan was the largest Muslim country in the world at the time of its foundation; today, it is the second most populous, after Indonesia. All the key facets of modern Islam worldwide were well rep¬resented in colonial India and they have continued to be so in Pakistan: Sufism; traditionalist scholars, the 'ulama, and their institutions of learning, the madrasas; Islamism; and Islamic modernism. Several of them received their earliest and what proved to be highly influential articulations in this vast region. It was in colonial India, for instance, that some of the first modernist Muslim intellectuals had emerged, and their work soon came to resonate well beyond South Asia.' Sayyid Abul-A'la Mawdudi (d. 1979), whose career straddled British India and the first three decades of Pakistan, was, for his part, one of the most influential Islamist ideologues of the twentieth century. South Asia did not pioneer madrasas, but few countries match the growth that this institution and those associated with it have witnessed over the course of Pakistan's history. It is in Pakistan, too, that the movement of the Taliban emerged in the years following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. And in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Pakistan has been not only a major front in the global War on Terror but also the site of an Islamist radicalism that has had important implications for contemporary Islam, and not just in South Asia.

As one might expect, there is a significant body of literature on different facets of Islam in colonial South Asia and in Pakistan. What is lacking is a work that brings them together within the confines of a single study. Such studies have seldom been attempted for other regions of the Muslim world either. This is hardly surprising, given that the examination of any particular facet, whether Islamism or the Islam of the 'ulama, already poses enough challenges to allow a venture very far beyond it. Yet, the sum of more specialized studies can fall considerably short of meeting the need for a broader view of the religious landscape. This book is an effort in that direction. How have various facets of Islam interacted with one another and with a state created in the name of Islam? How are the different Islamic orientations to be distinguished from one another? What sort of constraints have the differences among them

placed on the ability of their adherents to join hands at particular moments in history? How significantly and to what effect had the various religious orientations that occupied the South Asian Islamic landscape at the beginning of the twentieth century changed in relation to one another by the early twenty-first century? What is the context, both immediate and long term, in which Islamist militancy has emerged in Pakistan? What has hampered the ability of the governing elite to effectively combat it? And why has Islamic modernism undergone a decline in the course of Pakistan's history, as I would argue it has? These are among the questions I address in this book.

Though the scope of this study is necessarily broad, certain facets of Muslim religious life have had to remain largely unattended here. How Islamic beliefs and practices are reflected in and shaped by poetry and fictional literature, art, media, and film falls, with some exceptions, outside the scope of this book. So does the lived practice of Islam. It would take extensive ethnographic work, not attempted for this study, to shed light, for instance, on the nature and meaning of devotional practices at Sufi shrines or how such shrines participate in the political economy of the region in which they are located. The question of how madrasas are viewed in or sustained by the local communities among which they operate likewise requires the kind of work that lies beyond the ambition and scope of this study. By the same token, questions relating to the religious beliefs of ordinary women and men and the changes their understandings of the faith have undergone would have to depend not only on microlevel studies but also on large-scale surveys, neither of which exist in abundance for Pakistan.

This is not intellectual history in the narrow sense of being concerned only with a history of ideas; it is keenly interested in the political and other contexts in which particular ideas developed and why certain understandings of Islam found themselves disadvantaged vis-à-vis others. Nor does it posit any sharp distinction between belief and practice, between normative and lived Islam. Yet, it does rely more often than not on written expressions of Islam, of debate and contestation on it, of the development and change it has continued to undergo. It is therefore more attentive to the

discourses and the initiatives of those aspiring to shape people's religious and political life than it is to those whose lives were presumably being informed or shaped by such discourses. Once again, however, the barriers between these two sides look firmer in outward appearance than they may be in reality. Official archives, too, can shed much light on life, thought, and agency at the grassroots, after all. For instance, the extensive records of the Court of Inquiry that the government of the Punjab had established in the aftermath of a religio-political agitation directed against the Ahmadis, a heterodox community, in 1953 is an unusually rich resource for an understanding not only of the views of the modernist elite governing the new state but also of the perspectives of the religio-political groups that had been involved in the agitation. We also get occasional glimpses in these records of small-time mosque-preachers, local leaders, and ordinary people caught up in it. An archive such as this, despite its focus on one particular set of events, has much to say about varied facets of Islam in Pakistan and that is how I have utilized it here. When it comes to state legislation, to take another example, we may not always know very well how particular initiatives relating to Islam actually shaped people's lives. But even here, what we can try to understand is not only what vision animated those legislative initiatives but also what responses they evoked from members of particular religious groups and how the initiatives and the responses in question have shaped a contested religious sphere in colonial India and in Pakistan.

If not all facets of Islam can be accommodated into this study, not all even among those represented here can obviously occupy center stage. That belongs to Islamic modernism, which I understand as a complex of religious, intellectual, and political initiatives aimed at adapting Islam—its beliefs, practices, laws, and institutions—to the challenges of life in the modern world. Such challenges were felt most forcefully under European colonial rule. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century modernists—and not just the Muslims among them, though it is on them that I focus here—had internalized to various degrees colonial assessments of the societies under European governance. These

were seen, in contrast with the European world, as traditionbound, stagnant, priest-ridden, and superstitious; their laws as antiquated, capricious, and barbaric; their precolonial rulers as corrupt and despotic; their intellectual cultures as decadent, and their systems of education as devoid of useful knowledge. Defeat at the hands of the European powers had exposed the hollowness of traditional norms, practices, and structures, showing them all to be unsustainable. While colonial officials saw such contrasts as a justification for their rule, the early modernists viewed them as necessitating a thoroughgoing reform of Muslim thought and practice.

Modernist reformers tended also to differ from colonial, and Orientalist, analyses of Muslim societies in their conviction that Islam could, in fact, be adapted to the needs of the modern world without ceasing to be Islam. Writing in the early twentieth century, Lord Cromer, the consul-general of Egypt (1883-1907), had cautioned: "let no practical politician think that they have a plan capable of resuscitating a body which is not, indeed, dead, and which may yet linger on for centuries, but which is nevertheless politically and socially moribund, and whose gradual decay cannot be arrested by any modern palliatives however skillfully they may be applied." The modernist enterprise was, however, predicated precisely on the conviction that the decline of Muslim societies could indeed be remedied and that it did not require relinquishing Islam itself. What it did require was that Islam be restored to its original purity, and its core values combined with what European science and other forms of modern knowledge had to offer. Only then would the adherents of this religion be capable of scientific, moral, and material progress in the modern world. Yet, the acquisition of Western knowledge, a key facet of modernist reform, carried significant costs, some of which threatened only to substantiate predictions about the irreconcilability of Islam and the modern world. As Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), the pioneering modernist of Muslim South Asia observed in 1884, "May the English-educated young men ... forgive me, but I have not seen a person ... with an inclination for the English sciences who still has complete faith in the Islamic matters as

they are current in our time" The silver lining to this sobering assessment was, of course, that the "Islamic matters ... current in our time" were not the authentic teachings of Islam. Yet, it did underscore the herculean nature of the project of giving Islam an expression that was true to its original teachings, at home in the modern world, and capable of being seen by the community at large as authentic. Nearly nine decades later, Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988), an influential scholar who will figure prominently in this book, found that a robust combination of properly Islamic norms and modernizing reform was still elusive among the governing elite of countries like Pakistan: "many of the bureaucrats in these countries are not Muslim modernists but simple modernists, i.e., Westernizers, while quite a few are simple conservatives and the instances of Muslim modernists are very few indeed. But it is my belief that Islamic modernism has good chances of eventual success, although ... the final outcome is uncertain". That belief and that uncertainty have continued to characterize Islamic modernism.

The modernists have never become anything akin to a school of law or theology, let alone a sect They have had significant differences among themselves and their positions have continued to evolve, as one might expect. Even so, as the foregoing would already suggest, some core convictions are recognizable as having frequently guided modernist thought and policy: that the true "spirit" of Islam resides in the Qur'an and in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad rather than in how Muslims have either lived or thought about their religion for much of their history; that self-professed loci of Islamic authority, such as the 'ulama and the Sufis, have distorted the teachings of Islam, illegitimately assumed the role of intermediaries between God and the believers, fragmented the unity of the faith and, in concert with unenlightened despots, been at the heart of Muslim decline; that the fundamental teachings of Islam are not merely in accord with but superior to, and no less universal than, the best of what modern, liberal, values have had to offer to the world. As Liaquat Ali Khan, the first prime minister of Pakistan, had put it in the constituent assembly in March 1949, in moving what has come to be known

as the Objectives Resolution, the goal in establishing the new state was "to give the Muslims the opportunity that they have been seeking, throughout these long decades of decadence and subjection, of finding freedom to set up a polity which may prove to be a laboratory for the purpose of demonstrating to the world that Islam is not only a progressive force in the world, but it also provides remedies for many of the ills from which humanity has been suffering "

Easy to caricature today for their idealism and bombast, such convictions have had great purchase in Muslim circles seeking to find a way of simultaneously being good Muslims and leading successful lives in the colonial—and postcolonial—dispensations. Those holding them have often sought much more than that, however. Enjoying positions of considerable influence as intellectuals, makers of public opinion, political leaders, and the governing elite, they have sought to transform the entire religious landscape in accordance with their conceptions of Islam and of how its interests, and those of ordinary believers, are best served. Insomuch as the sweep and audacity of their aspirations relate to all facets of Islam, it does seem worthwhile to study Islam in conditions of modernity with reference to them.

Some scholars have seen Islamic modernism as a particular phase in the intellectual and political history of the modern Muslim world, one largely limited to the era of European colonialism. Later generations, according to this view, would go in other directions, among them secular nationalism, Marxism, and Islamism. I take a rather different view in this study. Secular nationalism and Marxism have not had much purchase in Pakistan, and while Islamism has always been an important part of the religio-political landscape, it has never come close—despite warnings from different quarters—to governing the country, either through electoral or other means. For its part, modernism has continued to guide official policy on matters relating to Islam, its institutions, and its practices. Modernism has indeed been in gradual decline in Pakistan. But it took several decades after the establishment of the state for that decline to set in. Among my concerns in the following chapters is not only to illustrate and account for this decline but also to shed some light on how, both in its aspirations and in its decline, modernism has shaped, even as it has been shaped by, other facets of Islam.

To speak of decline in this case is not, moreover, to posit that modernism has exited the scene or is about to do so. The fact that it remains ensconced in the corridors of power is enough to suggest otherwise. In the wider Muslim world and beyond, too, modernist intellectuals have continued to make their presence felt. Though couched in a rather different language, the key concerns of such intellectuals in the contemporary world reveal broad continuities with their acknowledged and unacknowledged predecessors. Such continuities are to be observed in discourses on the Qur'an's "universals," which alone are held to encompass the shari' a's principal concerns and the religion's true spirit, as opposed to the specifics of a medieval consensus on this or that that competing conceptions of Islam are cast in sharp relief and rival claims to religious authority have continued to be articulated.

Four methodological points are worth noting before proceeding further. First, that the modernists—the intellectuals among them as well as members of the political and the governing elite—loom large in this study and yet the book is not exclusively devoted to them has required choices of its own. I have tried to delineate major aspects of competing religio-political trends in British India and in Pakistan in such a way that they are not reduced to how the modernists have viewed them, or vice versa. Nor have I limited my account of those other facets to points of direct contact with modernism. The fact that modernism does occupy center stage in my account has nonetheless allowed me to highlight some particular dimensions rather than others of the wider landscape. For instance, the career of Sufism in twentieth-century South Asia could be described from a variety of different angles: the history of particular Sufi orders; reformist discourses among the Sufis; Sufism, politics, and the colonial and the postcolonial state; South Asian Sufi trends in their interaction with those in the wider Muslim world, and so forth. My account is especially attentive to how Islamic modernism has figured in some of the contestations on Sufism, but the ways in which the ' ulama and the Islamists have viewed Sufism and how they have been variously shaped by aspects

of Sufi thought and practice is part of my discussion, too. The concern throughout is to offer a broadly illustrative view of Islam in some of its key dimensions and the complex ways in which these dimensions have interacted with and been shaped by one another. This approach would, I hope, allow for a fuller account of the changing Islamic landscape in British India and Pakistan than has usually been attempted while helping avoid a reification of any of the Islamic orientations under discussion here.

Second, a focus on Islam, as is the case here, admittedly poses some interpretive danger: of assuming that it plays a greater role in people's lives than does anything else and of making it the key explanatory factor in accounting for their thought and practice; conversely, of setting it apart from the rest of their lives. Without engaging in a detailed methodological discussion of such matters, suffice it to say here that I have tried to remain mindful of these pitfalls in what follows. I have done so primarily by placing my discussion of varied facets of Islam in the relevant historical, social, and political contexts, without reference to which it is impossible to make sense of the developments in question. We ought to be equally mindful of the fact that treating putatively religious matters as merely incidental to the study of a society, polity, or economy poses at least as many interpretive problems as does an examination that takes Islam seriously. Indeed, such neglect can be quite misleading in studying a society and state where contestations on Islam have indeed occupied center stage.

Third, a discussion of Islam in the modern world often made it tempting for scholars of an earlier generation and still does for many observers and policy analysts today to posit an age-old "tradition" in conflict with "modernity," with the former visualized as either in the process of being swept away by the latter or as thwarting it from ushering in an era of enlightened progress. Tradition in such narratives is the very opposite of change—it is blindly imitative of the past, inflexible, anachronistic, sterile; modernity is the sum of values one ought to aspire to. The language of such binaries poses special problems in the study of Muslim societies since the nineteenth century

because this is precisely the language that the Muslim modernists have themselves used to characterize their rivals; the latter, for their part, have often been equally enamored of this language, with the difference that the pejorative implications of what the modernists call traditionalism are abandoned and the modernist concern with reform, innovation, and change is invested in turn with the darkest, most foreboding colors. Yet, as will be seen in the following chapters, traditionalist scholars could be flexible and pragmatic in accommodating themselves to new circumstances; to the extent that their critics have recognized this, they have attributed it to their opportunism. We need not rule out political opportunism in all instances, of course, but it hardly accounts for the variety of positions the ' ulama and the Islamists have been capable of taking on particular issues. Likewise, it is important to recognize that they have often had good strategic and rhetorical reasons to be inflexible when they have chosen to be so. Conversely, the modernists have not necessarily been more open to rethinking their certainties than have many 'ulama and Islamists, and over the course of their history, they too—without becoming a school of law or theology—have evolved a tradition of their own. In what follows, I will need to occasionally speak in terms of the modernists versus the traditionalists, of the conservative opposition to modernism, and so forth. On such occasions, it should be kept in mind that this language is intended principally to evoke certain contrasts in the religio-political landscape, usually as seen by those inhabiting it, not to give it any normative value. Nor is it to prejudge the outcome of the contests, of which we will observe many instances in this book, among feuding but not always clearly delineated sides.

Finally, the use of the term "modernism" for the kind of thought and practices that I examine in this book might be seen by some as problematic. In the context of early twentieth-century European and American art and literature, modernism has other connotations, among them, "the recurrent act of fragmenting unities (unities of character or plot or pictorial space or lyric form), the use of mythic paradigms, the refusal of norms of beauty, the willingness to make radical linguistic experiment, all

often inspired by the resolve (in [T. S.] Eliot's phrase) to startle and disturb the public." There could be overlaps between the philosophical underpinnings of that modernism and the aspirations of particular figures among Muslim modernists, but it is not my concern to explore them in this book. Though commonly used by earlier scholars and observers of Islam, modernism has come to be replaced by categories such as liberalism and reformism. As used by the critics of the modernists, the term can also carry pejorative suggestions about a new-fangled and inauthentic Islam.

Yet, its usage in the context of Western art and literature does not, by itself, render the term unserviceable for other purposes. As Nils Gilman has argued, American modernization theorists of the 1950s and the 1960s, too, can be characterized as modernists. In their case, "modernism was not just an aesthetic phenomenon but also a form of social and political practice in which history, society, economy, culture, and nature itself were all to be the object of technical transformation. Modernism was a polysemous code word for all that was good and desirable." Something similar could be said of the Muslim modernists who will figure in this book. Further, there is no clear dividing line between modernism and liberalism, as has been observed, and a category like "reformism" would not allow us to distinguish the approaches of many among the 'ulama and the Islamists from those characterized as modernists here. As for its pejorative connotations, it is worth bearing in mind that the modernists have used this characterization for the likes of themselves.

Needless to say, terms used to describe other religious and political trends can have their own difficulties. Islamists, for instance, do not usually characterize themselves as such, preferring to be seen simply as good Muslims. Islamism tends, moreover, to be conflated by many observers with militancy, yet violence is not a defining feature of this phenomenon. And even as many scholars and political leaders have been keen to insist that Islamists are not representative of Islam as a religious tradition, the term Islamist could be taken to posit precisely that conflation between the

phenomenon and the wider tradition. Such difficulties do not make Islamism unusable as category of analysis, but they do suggest the need for some careful handling. Much the same is true of modernism.

The Structure of [Islam in Pakistan: A History](#)

This book on the whole is organized in thematic rather than chronological terms. The first two chapters are designed, however, not only to highlight certain facets of Islam but also to provide a broad historical overview of developments in colonial India and in Pakistan, roughly from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. In focusing on particular groups or themes, subsequent chapters fill in historical detail as needed, but their primary goal is to illustrate evolving trends as they relate to the group or theme in question and, of course, to show how the various facets of Islam have interacted with one another. Consequently, these chapters will often range freely over the entire covered by this book, though the primary focus continues to be on developments since the birth of the state of Pakistan.

Chapter 1 introduces many of the groups that will form the subject of this book and charts their emergence and development in conditions of British colonial rule. As will be seen, the traditionalist orientations that enjoy great prominence in the South Asian landscape had begun to take a recognizable shape only in the late nineteenth century, though they drew, of course, on older styles of thought and practice. The early modernists, for their part, were rooted in a culture that was not significantly different from the 'ulama's. Among the concerns of this chapter is to trace their gradual distancing from each other. The processes involved in it would never be so complete, in either B. British India or in Pakistan, as to preclude the cooperation of the modernists and their conservative critics at critical moments. Nor, however, were the results of this distancing so superficial as to ever be transcended for good.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of modernism in Pakistan, from the country's inception to the present. It draws attention to the salience of ethical commitments in modernist conceptions of Islam—

commitments that were often meant as a counterweight to traditionalist understandings of Islamic law and as justifications for its reform, but which also stood in some tension with the authoritarianism that has often characterized Islamic modernism. Much of this authoritarianism came from the fact that it was the modernists who populated the ranks of the governing elite, that this elite has remained in power for long periods of time without much accountability to the people, and that the best chance that many modernist intellectuals have had of seeing their ideas implemented has been through unsavory alliances with unrepresentative rulers. But some of the authoritarianism has been endemic to modernist conceptions of Islam itself, a fact far more apparent to those at their receiving end than to the modernists themselves.

The 'ulama are the focus of chapter 3, which seeks to bring out some of the ambiguities of the relationship in Pakistan between them and the modernists. The traditionalist ' ulama have had some very particular ideas about an Islamic state, ideas at considerable variance with those of the modernist governing elite. Yet, even as the ' ulama have bitterly resisted modernist legislation on matters seen as encroaching upon their understandings of Islam, they have often been willing to accommodate themselves to constitutional and political developments in the country as spearheaded by the modernists, and they have continued to benefit from the patronage extended to them by successive governments. The modernists, for their part, have seldom been able to develop a significant constituency among the ' ulama, and this despite the existence in Pakistan's early decades of some ' ulama with a modernist orientation. Besides drawing attention to the latter, and thereby to fractures within the ranks of the ' ulama, this chapter seeks also to shed some light on how the 'ulama associated with particular doctrinal orientations have fared in relation to one another and how one of these, represented by the Deobandis, has overtaken others in the religio-political sphere.

In turning to Islamism, chapter 4 provides an account of one of the most central of all Islamist ideas, in Pakistan and in the wider Muslim world—

the idea that sovereignty belongs to God alone. As Mawdudi and other Islamists have articulated it, the implication is that all legal and political authority derives from God and His injunctions, as enunciated in the Qur'an and in the normative example of the Prophet Muhammad. One could not be a Muslim without accepting this idea, nor could a state be Islamic without recognizing it. As will be seen, however, the Islamists are not the only people who have espoused the sovereignty of God. It has figured prominently in non-Islamist, including modernist, circles, too. For instance, the previously mentioned Objectives Resolution endorses it as well. Part of the concern of this chapter is to examine what it has meant in different circles. We would seek also to explore the provenance and history of this idea. Though it is usually taken for granted that Mawdudi had put this idea into circulation, the question of how he may have come upon it has never been asked. Then there is the question, which we will also examine in this chapter, of why his formulation, rather than any other, has been the most influential among competing conceptualizations of the idea.

Any study of Islam in a predominantly Muslim state and of aspirations to give it a prominent place in the state necessarily raises questions about religious minorities. Though I touch briefly in this book on non-Muslim minorities, the focus of chapter 5 is on two Muslim minorities, the Ahmadis and the Shia, and some of the contestations around their position in the state. How these communities have fared in Pakistan is part of the story here, with the Ahmadis being declared a non-Muslim minority in 1974 and significant Shi'i-Sunni sectarian violence in the country since the 198os. The principal concern of the chapter is, however, to explore the anxieties that the existence and activities of these minority communities have generated among the 'ulama and the Islamists. In case of the Ahmadis, it will be seen that the anxieties in question have had to do not merely with the peculiarities of Ahmadi beliefs about the Prophet Muhammad, but with Islamic modernism itself. Though most South Asian modernists are not Ahmadis, Ahmadi discourses have tended to echo ideas similar to those of many modernists, and this has served to aggravate conservative opposition to the Ahmadis. The

anxieties generated by the Shi' a, much exacerbated by the impact and rhetoric of the Iranian revolution of 1979, have a different locus, and they, too, go beyond Sunni discomfort with particular Shi ' i beliefs and practices. Much more than the Ahmadis, the Shi' a have raised difficult questions about what, if any, kind of Islamic law can be given public force in Pakistan, laying bare in the process nagging uncertainties about whether Pakistan can ever fully claim to be an Islamic state.

Chapter 6 moves to some other expressions of contestation in the religious sphere, taking place in this instance on the once expansive terrain of Sufism. Long a core part of Muslim identity, in South Asia and elsewhere in the Muslim world, Sufi practices, doctrines, and institutions have continued into modern times to exercise considerable influence not only on common people but also on the religious and political leaders of the community. Though many among the 'ulama, including the reformists in their ranks, have often had a relatively seamless relationship with Sufism, the Islamists, too, and even the modernists have been receptive to the appeal of Sufism. It is not difficult, for instance, to detect ideas of a Sufi provenance in some core modernist commitments. Yet, the conditions of modernity, the claims of the modern state, and modernist and Islamist efforts to radically reshape Islam in a particular image, with some recent help from militant Islamist groups, have hit institutional Sufism hard. Sufism has had some other vulnerabilities, too, which have also contributed to a certain shrinking of the space it has traditionally occupied in this part of the world.

Chapter 7 focuses on religio-political violence, whose widespread incidence, after Pakistan's realignment in the US-led War on Terror in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent rise of a new, Pakistani, Taliban, has threatened the very fabric of state and society. Like the rest of the book, this chapter takes a long historical view, one that goes well beyond the post-2001 developments and their immediate context. I examine the violence in ques¬tion from two broad and intertwined perspectives, one relating to the state and the other to Islam and those speaking in its terms. Part of my concern in this chapter is to contribute to an understanding of how the

governing elite and the military have often fostered the conditions in which the resort to religiously inflected violence has been justified. But I also suggest that the nonstate actors—ideologues and militants—have had an agency of their own, which is not reducible to the machinations of the state, and that their resort to relevant facets of the Islamic tradition also needs to be taken seriously in order to properly understand their view of the world and such appeal as they have had in particular circles. By the same token, even as it has helped cultivate a certain narrative of jihad, the Pakistani ruling establishment has often labored under severe constraints in trying to control that narrative, and some understanding of such constraints, too, can shed useful light not only on religio-political violence but also on the career of Islam in Pakistan.

The epilogue ends this book with some reflections on the changes Islam has undergone in Pakistan, over the course of the country's history but also in comparison with where the relevant religious trends stood in the early twentieth century. <>

Caliphate: The History of an Idea by Hugh Kennedy [Basic Books, 9780465094387]

From a preeminent scholar of Islamic history, the authoritative history of caliphates from their beginnings in the 7th century to the modern day

In Caliphate, Islamic historian Hugh Kennedy dissects the idea of the caliphate and its history, and explores how it became used and abused today. Contrary to popular belief, there is no one enduring definition of a caliph; rather, the idea of the caliph has been the subject of constant debate and transformation over time. Kennedy offers a grand history of the caliphate since the beginning of Islam to its modern incarnations. Originating in the tumultuous years following the death of the Mohammad in 632, the caliphate, a politico-religious system, flourished in the great days of the Umayyads of Damascus and the Abbasids of Baghdad. From the seventh-century Orthodox caliphs to the nineteenth-century Ottomans, Kennedy explores the tolerant rule of Umar, recounts the traumatic murder of the caliph Uthman, dubbed a tyrant by many, and revels in the

flourishing arts of the golden eras of Abbasid Baghdad and Moorish Andalucía. Kennedy also examines the modern fate of the caliphate, unraveling the British political schemes to spur dissent against the Ottomans and the ominous efforts of Islamists, including ISIS, to reinvent the history of the caliphate for their own malevolent political ends.

In exploring and explaining the great variety of caliphs who have ruled throughout the ages, Kennedy challenges the very narrow views of the caliphate propagated by extremist groups today. An authoritative new account of the dynasties of Arab leaders throughout the Islamic Golden Age, Caliphate traces the history-and misappropriations-of one of the world's most potent political ideas.

Excerpt: What is caliphate? What does the term mean? What is the history of the idea? Is it an ancient irrelevance, only interesting as a voice from a past which is safely consigned to history? Or is it a concept that we can interpret and use today? In this book I shall try to answer these questions. The concept of caliphate has had many different interpretations and realizations through the centuries, as we shall see, but fundamental to them all is that it offers an idea of leadership which is about the just ordering of Muslim society according to the will of God. Some have argued that the caliph is the shadow of God on earth, a man whose authority is semi-divine and whose conduct is without blame; many more would accept that the caliph was, so to speak, the chief executive of the umma, the Muslim community, an ordinary human with worldly powers, and there is a wide spectrum of ideas in between. All are informed by the desire to see God's will worked out among all Muslims.

This is not a book, primarily, about contemporary politics. It is rather a history book and much of the historical material it deals with dates to the period which historians in the Anglo-Saxon tradition call the early Middle Ages or even the Dark Ages, the four centuries between the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 and the coming of the Crusaders to the Middle East in 1097, though some of the narrative discussion goes through to the twenty-first century. It is easy to imagine that this period has little or no bearing on the position we,

Muslims and non-Muslims alike, find ourselves in today and indeed most accounts of the so-called Islamic State, for example, begin with recent history and see the movement as a response to western influence and twenty-first-century pressures. I would argue, on the contrary, that in order to understand Islamic State's idea of caliphate, and why it should prove relevant and important to many, we have to understand its roots deep in the Muslim tradition. Islamic State has made the revival of the caliphate a centrepiece, a keystone of its project for Islamic renewal, and the response this has generated shows the potency of the idea almost fourteen centuries since it first emerged. For modern Islamists searching for a basis to construct a viable political vision for the revival of the Muslim umma, the events of these centuries are at once an inspiration and a justification.

These events continue to be an inspiration partly because they recall a world in which the caliphate was the most powerful and advanced polity in the whole of western Eurasia, when Baghdad had a population of some half a million while London and Paris could only boast a few thousand inhabitants, when the caliphate administered huge areas with a standing army and a literate and numerate bureaucracy and Baghdad and Cairo were huge centres of trade and culture. To anyone within the Muslim tradition or outside it, knowledge of the history of this period can encourage that cultural self-confidence which is essential to any civilization if it is to live at peace with itself and with its neighbours. At this level my book is aimed at Muslims and non-Muslims who want to inform themselves, as everyone should, about the real glories and achievements of a vibrant civilization.

But it goes further than that. For some Muslims, the history of the caliphate points to a time when Muslims were God-fearing and devout, puritanical and self-disciplined, and always willing to sacrifice their lives in the path of Allah. This vision is not simply a nostalgic memory. To a degree not found in any other contemporary political discourse, this ancient past justifies the present for certain Islamist groups. Reading such contemporary propaganda as the Islamic State periodical Dabīq, it is

impossible not to be struck by the constant references to the acts of the Prophet Muhammad, the sahāba who were his companions and disciples, and the early caliphs. If they did something, the argument goes, then we should follow their example. No further justification is needed, and even the most apparently cruel and barbaric actions require no further legitimization if they can be shown to be following the examples of such great heroes. We cannot understand what these loud and insistent voices are saying, still less argue against them, unless we too go down the road into the ancient past.

History has a power for this tradition which we do not find elsewhere. No one in Britain looks to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a work which dates from the same centuries as the early Arabic sources, and uses it as a way of justifying political behaviour today. It may intrigue us, it may give important insights into the ways our ancestors conducted themselves and the deeds of King Alfred may even, in a general way, be inspirational, but they will not be normative, nor will they provide instructions or excuses for today's and tomorrow's behaviour. That is why any discussion of the concept of caliphate has to be a history book, and why we need to properly understand these complex memories and traditions.

I have sought to enliven the book by quoting original texts translated from Arabic and Persian, which can give us insight into the lived experience of caliphate, records of what people saw and heard at the time unfiltered by later attitudes and preoccupations. Such texts make the point that many Muslims looked to their caliphs, and expected their caliphs, to produce dazzling displays of opulence and be a focus of cultural activities which would redound to the credit of not just the ruling dynasty but the whole Muslim community. By reading these descriptions we can perhaps recover something of the delight and joie de vivre which attended the performance of the caliphate, but which is often lost in dry narrative history.

I have made use of modern historical works, starting with that of my illustrious predecessor as Professor of Arabic at SOAS, Sir Thomas Arnold, whose book The Caliphate (1924) was the first

volume in English devoted to the subject. Fellow academics will recognize many of my debts. The main ones I have acknowledged in the Notes and Further Reading, and my apologies go to any I have inadvertently missed. Fundamentally, however, what I write stems from within the Muslim tradition. The material is derived not from orientalist outsiders but from the wealth of intelligent and perceptive Muslim historical writing, mostly in Arabic but some in Persian and Turkish, which is one of the great glories of the Islamic cultural tradition. I cannot pretend to have covered all the various manifestations of caliphate throughout the Muslim world; in particular, some readers may feel that I have neglected developments in south and southeast Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but I feel that would have made the work too long and diffuse and these should be the subject of another study.

This coming from within the tradition generates a respect for political and religious actors and writers. The early Muslims, who struggled to create institutions which would express Islamic values while also providing a safe and orderly framework in which they could practise their faith, did not, in the main, act in fanatical or irrational ways, nor were the writings in which they recorded their deeds, debates and disputes, fundamentally dishonest. They wrestled with political and religious dilemmas which are common to many human societies: how to live the good life; how to construct a community which enables people to live together even if they do not have the same opinions; what offences are so grave that a person must be expelled from the community or put to death; and, perhaps most fundamentally, how to understand the will of God and what He expects of mankind. If we treat their arguments, fears, hopes and visions with respect, we will come much closer to understanding their deeds and attitudes than if we dismiss their concerns or feel that their writings are too partisan and tendentious to be taken seriously.

This book is quietly polemical. The message which runs through it is that the idea of caliphate is a rich and varied tradition. Many Muslims have embraced the argument that such an institution is the best way of ordering human society, but caliphate is a many-splendoured thing. There is no

one way, no single template or legal framework which defines caliphate. History tells us that there have been caliphs of many different sorts, warrior caliphs, pious caliphs, intellectual caliphs, pleasure-loving caliphs, incompetent caliphs, cruel and tyrannical caliphs. They are all part of the caliphal tradition. There has never been one generally agreed view of what powers the office should have, who is qualified to be caliph and how caliphs should be chosen. Perhaps it is this flexibility, even uncertainty, which has enabled the idea to survive so long and have traction in so many different Muslim societies.

My aim here is to show something of the variety of caliphal experience. You can choose what you want to take from this tradition, but the choice is yours. If you want a caliphate which is aggressive and fiercely controlling of the Muslim population, you can find precedents in the vast historical records. If you want a caliphate which is generous and open to different ideas and customs while, of course, remaining true to its vision of God's will and purpose, then you can find that in the historical tradition too. The past bears many different messages.

There are those who see caliphate as a vehicle for imposing their particular and often very narrow view of Islam on the umma; there are others who see caliphate as a justification for aiming at world conquest; but there are equally those who see caliphate as simply providing a framework in which Muslims can strive to live a godly life and make up their own minds about the best way to this. There are those who have looked to the caliph as God's representative on earth with semi-divine powers; others who have seen his role as protecting the Muslim community from its enemies by collecting taxes and raising armies. And we should not forget those who remember with pride the open, broadminded and inclusive societies presided over by the great Abbasid and Fatimid caliphs and the superb intellectual and artistic achievements they encouraged. The history of the caliphate, and Islamic history more generally, must not be the possession of one interpretation or one narrow view, rather we should all, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, rejoice in the richness and variety of the experience of caliphate through the ages.

The history of the idea of caliphate has endured and been used and adapted from the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 until the present day, a period of almost fourteen centuries. It has been discussed, adopted and rejected in countries stretching from as far as South East Asia to Portugal and Morocco. It is no surprise, then, that the concept has been put into practice in many different ways and expressed in many different languages. The variety of the caliphal experience is therefore one of the themes I shall explore in the following chapters. At the same time, these different practices and expressions of the idea of caliphate have a common historical basis, or rather they derive from a memory of historical circumstances which have important elements in common, even though their interpretation may vary wildly. The way in which this tradition was expounded, developed and invented in different eras and in different political and social environments will be one of the main themes of this work.

Three Questions

Three questions will dominate the discussion in this volume and run through its chapters like a connecting thread. The first of these is: how was a caliph to be chosen? Three possible answers to this question emerged. The first option was that the caliph would be chosen by the Muslims themselves. This apparently simple idea, however, could be worked out in many different ways. Who were the choosers to be? Should there be many or could just one be enough? Was any sane and sound adult male (the idea of a female caliph being one which is never entertained in these historical debates) eligible for the office, an idea espoused by the Kharijites, or did the caliph have to be of a certain family or lineage; above all did they have to be of the Prophet's tribe, Quraysh, for the Sunnis, or even his direct descendants through his daughter Fātima, his son-in-law Ali and their children, Hasan and Husayn, for the Shi`ites?

The second option was that the caliphate should be hereditary within one Holy Family, that of Ali and Fātima, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. But this led to further questions and possibilities. Should all of the family be considered eligible or just one

branch? Within that branch, should the office be decided by primogeniture, the succession of the eldest son, even if that son was apparently incapable or failed to obey the established laws and customs of the Muslims? Should he still be chosen or passed over in favour of a more suitable candidate? And, of course, as the years and centuries wore on, more and more people could claim to be descended from the holy lineage until their numbers seemed to be as great as the sands of the sea. In these circumstances it was possible, even likely, that individuals invented their genealogies, either because they were frauds who hoped to accrue some of the benefits of such a prestigious connection, or because they were deluded and genuinely felt that the blood of the Prophet ran through their veins.

The third option was that of nass. Nass essentially means choice or designation by the previous ruler. It often meant in practice the choice by a ruler of one or more (an heir and a spare) of his sons, but not necessarily so, as when the caliph Ma'mūn chose a member of the family of Ali instead of one of his own Abbasid sons and relatives. Nass had very little theoretical or ideological underpinning compared with either election or heredity, but in practice it was the most common way in which the office was passed down through the generations. It gave the green light, so to speak, for the concept of dynastic succession.

The first question — how was the caliph to be chosen — was inextricably bound up with the second: what should the caliph do and how extensive should his powers be? There was a whole spectrum here between those who held that the caliph was essentially a God-king, the equal or even superior of the Prophet Muhammad, and those who believed that he should be more of a primus inter pares or chief executive of the Muslim community, with no more direct connection with the Almighty than any other Muslim. This difference was connected with the question of the method of choice. If the succession was hereditary within the Holy Family, it was essentially a choice made by God and therefore the leader had divine approval, he was God's chosen instrument in the ordering of human affairs and had the power to

interpret, or even modify, the Qur'an and the sunna (the practice and sayings of Muhammad). This is essentially the Shi`i view. If, on the other hand, the caliph was to be chosen by humans, however pious and learned, then he was necessarily fallible: all humans can make mistakes. He would certainly have no direct line to God, no status to interpret the Qur'an or decide law. That would have to be left to the scholars and intellectuals (ulama) who devoted their lives to the study and understanding of the Qur'an and the hadith (sayings of the Prophet). This is essentially the Sunni view.

The third fundamental question was: what was the evidence on which these issues could be decided and how should it be interpreted? After the death of Muhammad in 632, the Muslim community was confronted with an unprecedented situation. There were no guidelines to be sought in the past for the mission of Muhammad, and his reception by the Muslims had made the pre-Islamic past irrelevant anyway, except as an awful warning of how not to behave and order society. Equally the practices of the great Roman and Persian monarchies could not be adduced because they had rejected the teachings of the Prophet and been defeated and, in the case of the Persian monarchy, destroyed by the Muslims with God's support. In fact, as time wore on some Muslims did incorporate ideas from the ancient monarchies about how things should be done, but such ideas could never be the basis of an argument, since they would otherwise impugn the unique validity of the Prophet's message and hence of Islam itself Only the ancient prophets sent by God, all 144,000 of them, were possible exemplars, but, with the important exceptions of Moses and Jesus, the lives and policies of these shadowy or even unknown figures could provide little guidance.

In the absence of ancient or foreign models, the Muslim community soon began to develop a body of precedent based on its own early history, as remembered, and misremembered and invented, by its participants and eyewitnesses and recorded in the form of akhbār (sing. khabar), which were essentially short stories and anecdotes. These in turn were gathered together and edited by a later generation, at the beginning of the eighth century

or earlier, into collections of accounts which over time became elaborated written accounts. In the form in which we have them today, they date from the mid-ninth century to the first half of the tenth, thus being a century and a half, or even two centuries, older than the events they describe. This apparent time gap has provoked considerable, and largely unhelpful, anguish among modern historians. The contradictions and discrepancies have been used to argue that this material is so unreliable as to be useless for reconstructing 'what really happened' or so partisan as to be actively misleading. But all historical writing is like that. The great historians of the early medieval Christian world, Procopius, Gregory of Tours, Bede and all their contemporaries and followers, used historical narrative to make points and arguments and selected those incidents and characters which would sustain the ideas they were presenting. So it was with the early Muslim recorders and compilers.

There are two important things we should remember about the compilation of these early histories and the use we make of them. The first is that they present a wide variety of detail and interpretation within a broadly similar framework. Almost without exception, they tell us that there were four caliphs who followed the death of the Prophet, Abū Bakr (632-4), Umar (634-44), Uthmān (644-56) and Ali (656-61). That said, there are different opinions about these four characters. For some, probably the majority, they were venerable figures whose utterances and conduct should be studied and admired by all Muslims. Others, however, felt that the first two, Abū Bakr and Umar, were indeed great, but that things had started to go wrong in the reign of the third caliph, Uthmān, largely because of his personal failings, and that the proper order of things was only restored with the accession of Ali. Still others argued that Abū Bakr has usurped the rights of Ali, the true heir of the Prophet, and that Umar and Uthmān were also evil-doers whose rule was illegitimate and whose conduct was flawed. True caliphate always belonged to Ali and was only restored, if only briefly, during his reign. And so these differences of opinion continued under the Umayyads (661-750) and the Abbasids (750-

1258) and under other dynasties with caliphal pretensions. Far from being unreliable or, even worse, deliberately dishonest, accounts of such differences are profoundly revealing of the attitudes and debates of the time. But the modern reader must always be aware that there are many elements in the sources which can be seized on and developed for later polemic.

And this is the second point about the early historical narratives. They are fundamental to all discussions of the nature of caliphate; they are the building blocks of political debate. To determine the true nature and function of the office of caliph, most Muslim thinkers have turned, not to abstract theories or principles of political institutions, in the manner of Hobbes and Rousseau for example, but to the records of the ancient caliphs, especially the first four. These records are not just, as Wordsworth put it, of 'old, unhappy, far off-things, and battles long ago', but events which determine how people should behave and act in their own time, how they should reconcile the demands of living together with their fellow human beings with absolute obedience to the will of Almighty God. If this book seems burdened by historical narrative and discussion, this is because it is the way the debate about caliphate has always taken place and the way it is taking place now. If we are to understand this debate, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, we must understand the historical language in which it is conducted.

The following chapters, then, will set out to examine these three fundamental questions -- how a caliph should be chosen, the nature and extent of his powers, and the way in which they were recorded and used — in the light of the different historical periods of the caliphate, and to show how men in different times and places have used, and perhaps abused, the basic concepts which have informed the idea of caliphate throughout the ages. <>

Kingdoms of Faith: A New History of Islamic Spain by Brian A. Catlos [Basic Books, 9780465055876]

The history of Islamic Spain has been recounted many times, in many ways. What almost all these histories share is the presumption that religion was at the heart of this history — that Muslims, Christians, and Jews on the Iberian Peninsula engaged in a contest defined by their religious

identity and ideology. The three religions are seen as protagonists in an erratic tale. But as it turns out, the conventional histories of Islamic Spain are largely wrong.

In [Kingdoms of Faith: A New History of Islamic Spain](#), award-winning scholar Brian A. Catlos draws on a deep well of primary and secondary sources not previously accessible to English-speaking readers to offer an authoritative new account of the forces that shaped Islamic Spain.

Catlos argues that Islamic Spain was neither a site where civilizations clashed, nor a place of enlightened, progressive religious "tolerance." As he reveals, religious identity was only one means by which individuals imagined their place in he world. They also saw themselves as members of ethnic groups, subjects of kingdoms, inhabitants of towns and neighborhoods, members of professions and collectives, men and women, lovers and friends. And more often than not, these bonds of association were far more important than shared religious identity.

In this magisterial history, spanning the thousand years from the founding of Islam in the 7th century to the final expulsion)f Spain's Muslims in the early 17th century, Catlos shows us Christians allying with Muslims against fellow Christians, Jews rising to become kings of Christian and Muslims alike, and Muslim kingdoms granting citizenship to Christians and Jews. These cross-religious narratives rarely make it into the historical narrative. The chronicles and histories that historians use were compiled many years, often centuries, after the events they describe. As a result, they are distorted by hindsight, as well as by the prejudices, ideals, agendas, memories, aspirations, and convictions of their authors.

Catlos contends, religion was the language of conflict — every kingdom in this era presented itself as a "kingdom of aith" — but rarely its cause. Instead, it was a pretext for power grabs, for assassinations, for revolts, for betrayals, and for wars. Most rulers in this era were after power and prestige first — and used religion as a means to those ends.

Even as he advances an important new interpretation of the nature of Islamic Spain, Catlos thrillingly narrates the defining episodes this eventful millennium, including the Muslim conquest in 711; the rise of Cordoba — "the ornament of the world" — as a center of learning and culture in the 10th century; the Christian Reconquista in the 12th and 13th centuries, including the travels and conquests of the warrior known as El Cid; the tumultuous Taifa period, when Islamic Spain fractured and witnessed almost constant warfare; and the reign of Ferdinand and Isabel in the 15th century.

Throughout, Catlos explores the intellectual, literary, theological, scientific, and architectural marvels of Islamic Spain, from the invention of the astrolabe to the ribaldry of court poets, and from the magnificence of the Alhambra palace to the rediscovery of "lost" Classical treatises by authors such as Ptolemy, Galen, Plato, and Aristotle.

A richly textured, panoramic history of a crucial yet misunderstood era, Kingdoms of Faith reveals the origins of our interconnected, pluralistic world today.

Brian Catlos discusses :

- Why Kingdoms of Faith argues against the conventional views that Islamic Spain was a place of "tolerance" and "civilizational conflict";
- Why the history of Islamic Spain is central to European history;
- How cruelty, generosity, and humanity were all typical of both Islamic and Christian societies at this time; Why the overwhelming number of Muslims in al-Andalus were not "foreigners" or "invaders," but willing native converts from Christianity to Islam;
- The latest historical, literary and archeological research, particularly the innovative Spanish scholarship unavailable to English-language readers that has transformed our understanding of Islamic Spain;
- How even in ideologically and politically fraught times, social and cultural

integration among Christians, Muslims and Jews was profound — they became friends, business associates, lovers, and partners in crime; Why categories of religion and identity were fluid: the groups integrated — Christian and Jewish minorities lived in Muslim Spain, and Muslim and Jewish minorities in Christian Spain;

- How Medieval Christianity was transformed by the work Islamic philosophers like Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and al-Ghazali, who introduced radical re-workings of Aristotle and Neo-Platonist philosophers and kickstarted the European Renaissance;

- How al-Andalus transformed European literature and music, as well as their cuisine and eating customs; How Kingdoms of Faith is a history of religious "commuters," renegades, and individuals who saw no contradiction in participating in two or even three religious traditions and cultural communities;

- Why the Christian era of domination provides a window onto the emergence of new notions of religion, race and nation.

Interview

How does Kingdoms of Faith rewrite the history of Islamic Spain, countering conventional views?

The two conventional views of the history of Islamic Spain can be characterized as the "Clash of Civilizations" and the "tolerance and convivencia" perspective. The Clash of Civilizations approach starts from the presumption that Islam and Christianity (and Judaism) constituted well-defined, coherent, and internally consistent socio-cultural entities, that interact on the stage of history, usually in conflict, as if they were over-sized characters in some grand opera, with Islam as the mustachioed villain.

The Tolerance and Convevencia approach imagines the Islamic Middle Ages as some pre-modern age of ethno-religious harmony, which was gradually overturned by chauvinistic and intolerant Christianity, bringing oppression to Jews and Muslims alike. Both views are vast

oversimplifications, or caricatures of history, and neither corresponds even to the broad strokes. Both are projections of our own views and values back on the past. They lack nuance, and are simply not realistic depictions of the human condition. What Kingdoms of Faith does is assess religion and religious culture as only one of many vectors of identity and action that shaped people's conception of themselves and their place in the world in the middle ages. There are no "good guys," and no "bad guys" in the book, and so humanity in all its contradictory complexity is what drives the narrative.

Where does the "clash of civilizations" thesis go wrong? And why is "tolerance" also the wrong label to affix to the social relations of Islamic Spain?

Civilizations are not things that exist or have a life of their own. They represent imprecise categories of attributes that can be useful in certain circumstances, such as broad comparisons, but not much else. The problem is that once people think they have identified the essential characteristics of a civilization, they then imagine that these attributes are eternal and that they shape the actions and agendas of people and groups. This is far from clear, and very few of these generalizations hold up. For example, can we say that "Freedom" is an attribute of our "2000-year-old" Western Civilization, when slavery and formal marginalization of women were not only the norm but consciously espoused ideal for 19 out of the last 20 centuries? Who represents Western cultural values: hippies or Puritans? The same can be said for Jewish and Islamic civilizations. Tolerance is a misnomer because tolerance was rarely espoused as a conscious ideal. Plurality and diversity in all pre-Modern society presumed a rigid hierarchy of prestige and power among different communities which precluded equality, and the primacy of communal over individual rights — both of these run counter to our modern ideals, and invoking our ideas of "tolerance" only invites us to misunderstand the past.

Why is the history of Islamic Spain central to European history?

First of all Islamic Spain was part of Europe, and was deeply integrated into the social, political and

economic history of Europe, particularly the transformations that would eventually lead to the rise of European hegemony. Islamic Spain was also the main center for the dissemination of technologies, products, raw materials, and intellectual and artistic innovations that originated in the Islamic world to be transmitted to Europe. The effect on European society and culture was completely transformative. Without Islamic Spain there would have been no Renaissance and no Scientific Revolution (as they happened). Islamic Spain was also the crucible of modern Jewish culture and the Modern Hebrew language — the point of origin, for example of the Mishneh Torah and the Kabbalah, not to mention poetry, prose, philosophical and scientific works. Finally, it was largely in the context of contact with Islamic culture in Spain that European Christian culture constructed its own identity beginning around 1000, and then 500 years later, developed new ideas regarding race, religion, and colonization.

What qualities were shared by Islamic and Christian and Jewish communities at this time?

On the theological side Muslims, Christians and Jews recognized each other as all worshipping the God of Abraham, and shared a common intellectual/philosophical/scientific framework, which was based on Persian, Greek and Egyptian precedents. The latter provided a common foundation and a "mutual intelligibility" which encouraged collaboration and exchange of ideas and technologies, while the former was at once a source of anxiety and friction, but also of theological interchange and sympathy. On the human level they moved within and were shaped by the same environment, which encouraged acculturation and inter-group socialization — they shared food, music, dances, folk medicine and religious practices. Each of these cultures had a sense of nobility and aristocratic entitlement, associated with political and military power, and this provided a vector for collaboration and acculturation, just as they shared a belief that society should be ordered as a hierarchy of communities to reflect God's will. They all believed in and practiced slavery. In fact, they shared much more than they differed.

Why have we come to see the Muslims of al-Andalus as foreigners and invaders, and not the willing coverts to Christianity that they actually were?

This incorrect view of Spanish Islam is persistent due to European conceptions that the nation-state as the building block of history — an idea that did not really develop fully until the mid-19' century. This was eagerly taken up by many Spanish nationalist historians who sought to justify the claims of the Castilian ruling political and religious elite that Spain should be a united Catholic country under their rule — a rule they justified based on their supposed connections to the pre-Islamic Visigothic regime. The roots to this go far back, as the Castilian and Leonese monarchies began to make these claims as early as the 10th century (and it was no less untrue then...) That view is also the result of racial and ethnic prejudices deeply rooted in Spain and the rest of Europe — particularly the Anglo-American world, against both Muslims and Africans. The incorrect and racialized adjective "Moorish" to describe the Muslims of Spain is still used today even by some scholars, despite the fact that it is inaccurate and misleading.

Why do we commonly believe that religion was the main cause of conflict in Islamic Spain?

For some reason, even though it is obvious that today peoples' actions and agendas often have little relation to their supposed religious ideology or principles, for some reason we find it comforting imagine history on oversimplified terms. I suspect it is because it makes it easier for us to imagine "our people" as inherently good, and those we regard as outsiders as inherently bad. History is messy and morally ambiguous and that is a difficult and uncomfortable thing for us to grapple with, particularly if we personally identify with the people involved. We can see this operating in the right-wing media when pundits and so-called analysts or even politicians try to explain the complex geo-political realities of the modern Middle East by proposing, for example, that "they (meaning here, Muslims) hate us..." One suspects that these over-simplified and inaccurate generalizations are also deployed to polarize, divide and distract people in order for modern elites to achieve their own domestic agendas. This

is, of course, not restricted to our society — the extreme Jewish and Muslim right engages in similar rhetoric for similar reasons.

What new sources did you access in order to write Kingdoms of Faith?

New sources are constantly becoming available for the study of Islamic Spain, as new documents are discovered or edited. "New" medieval Arabic chronicles and treatises have come to light in recent years, as have new works in aljamiado — the hybrid language of Spain's Moriscos. Kingdoms of Faith is really unique in the way it brings together all sorts of sources that are usually not looked at together: histories and chronicles, archival materials, poetry, scientific texts and so on. In recent years a lot of important and transformational work has been carried out in fields like archeology and material culture, but until now, very little of this has made into larger narratives or non-specialist publications.

How did Christian, Jewish and Muslim cultures interact during this period?

Abrahamic religion and Greco-Persian intellectual traditions provided a common foundation for inter-cultural scientific and philosophical adaptation, transmission and innovation across a whole range of fields, and many intellectuals from the three communities really saw themselves as belonging to a community of scholars that transcended religious divisions. In terms of popular culture, the relationship was even more intimate, thanks to diverse local communities and religiously-blended households, Muslims, Christians and Jews, enjoyed many of the same songs, music, poems, stories, foods, celebrations and rituals — just as we do in our modern diverse societies today — in a continual process of mutual influence. Of course there were always members of the three faiths who resisted acculturation and integration, out of fear of the contamination of their religious beliefs and the decline of their community through conversion.

How did Islamic philosophers transform Medieval Christianity?

Using the precedents of early Christian and Jewish thinkers, Islamic philosophers worked doggedly and imaginatively to make Greek philosophy, both

Aristotelian and Platonic, which blew them away, compatible with Islamic theology. In doing so they not only preserved much Greek philosophy from oblivion (notable Aristotle), but introduced important improvement and innovations into Greek thought. Because at bottom Islam, Christianity and Judaism are very similar and confront the same general philosophical challenges (i.e.: a single eternal, all-powerful, all-good, all-knowing diety) Christian and Jewish theologians both participated in and appropriated the advances Islamic scholars made. In terms of Judaism Aristotelianism blossomed in the 1100s with Moses Maimonides, who is a product of the Arabo-Islamic intellectual milieux, and in Christianity with Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastic philosophers, who introduced rationalism to western European intellectual culture. Even at the time these Christian scholars recognized the Spanish Mulims scholar Ibn Rush (Averroes) as their intellectual god-father. The importance of this cannot be overstated. Similarly, Jewish and Christian mysticism (the Kabbalah and the Franciscan Spiritualists) drew directly on the Neo-Platonic philosophy that had developed in the Islamic world, among scholars like al-Ghazali, and popular sufi mystics.

How did al-Andalus transform European culture and customs more broadly?

Aside from philosophy, theology, and science, al-Andalus was the zone of transmission for new types of clothing, poetry, literature, musical instruments, games, foods, and so on. Without al-Andalus there would have been no rock and roll (it was here that Europe got the al- `ud, from whence the guitar), no chess (which through the twentieth century was considered the emblematic "Western" game of reason), and no digital revolution (it was through al-Andalus that European thinkers learned of the zero — the key to binary code which is the foundation of computing), Canterbury Tales and the Decameron, are both frame-tales — an Islamic literary style adapted via al-Andalus. Many foods, fruits, and spices were introduced to Europe via Islamic Spain. Most importantly perhaps, it was confrontation with a larger and more sophisticated Islamic world in the 11'" century that forced the Christian West to reconsider its own identity and place in the world.

What can we learn today from the interactions between different religious groups in Islamic Spain?

We learn that religion is seldom a cause of conflict, but often the language with which it is justified or excused. We can see that the greatest technological and cultural innovations come when we embrace the knowledge of others openly and make spaces for dialogue and collaboration that are not restricted to members of one community. We are reminded that people have an amazing and wonderful capacity to like each other and learn from each other, as long as they are put in a situation where they see their own situation as secure, and in which they think of themselves and their diverse neighbors as belonging to a single community with common goals and objectives.

Al-Andalus Unmoored

And so it was that over the course of nearly one thousand years, Tariq ibn Ziyad, the valiant Berber conqueror, was transformed into Ricote, the skulking Spanish exile, and the Muslim presence that had transformed the peninsula came to an end with the forced exile of the Moriscos of 1609 to 1614. But the expulsions did not, of course, mark the end of the peninsula's engagement with Islam, which continues to this day. Almost two million Muslims live in Spain today: some native converts but most of North African origin, many who are completely integrated in Spanish urban society and many others who labor in the fields picking fruit or in other menial tasks. Intrepid North Africans still cross the strait, but now as economic refugees, not warriors, and in flimsy pateras, not war galleys. And the memory of al-Andalus continues to loom large-a lost paradise, symbolized by the profaned magnificent mosque of Córdoba and the magnificent palace of the Alhambra.

The history of al-Andalus is not one of a foreign occupation. It is not an anomaly, nor is it an exception. It represents, rather, an integral part of the historical process that created not only modern Spain and Portugal but modern Europe as well. The history of al-Andalus is European history, but also Islamic history and Jewish history. Islam, Christianity, and Judaism do not represent three independent civilizations. They are all inextricably linked elements, or dimensions, of the larger venture we

call "the West"—the product of the ancient Near East and Hebrew, Greek, Persian, and Roman influences that combined in the Mediterranean over the course of the last few thousand years, drawing in peoples and cultures from Africa, Europe, western Asia, and beyond.

Al-Andalus and the Christian Spains that subsumed it occupy a central place in this historical process. Chronologically, the era of Islamic Spain bridges Late Antiquity, which saw the decline of the classical world and the emergence of Abrahamic monotheism, and the era of Modernity, with its new notions of race, nation, religion, progress, and knowledge. Geographically, it comprised a hinge between Christendom and the dar al-Islam. Creatively, it was the point where Africa, Europe, and western Asia met, and where the most profound processes of cultural innovation took place; it was the most important and enduring point of their diffusion. If one takes Islamic Spain out of the equation, European history simply does not add up.

Looking back on the history of al-Andalus and its interaction with its Christian neighbors, this appears obvious. From the time the Arabled conquerors arrived in Hispania in the early 700s to the time their descendants were expelled in the 1600s, the political, cultural, and social history of the region was not characterized by separation or isolation but by integration and collaboration among Christians, Muslims, and Jews. This is not to say that religious identity was not important or that it did not inform action or shape experience—the often viscerally hostile rhetoric of religious difference makes this clear. In fact, it may well have been the single most important element of people's identity. But even so, it was only one factor out of many that contributed to people's sense of who they were and how they should interact with others and move in the world.

Much ink has been spilled as to whether al-Andalus was an idyll of enlightened tolerance and convivencia or the arena of a brutal clash of civilizations. It was neither. Tolerance is hardly regarded as a virtue today, let alone in the Middle Ages, and most of the clashing took place within, not between, "civilizations." The great cultural

historian Amerigo Castro popularized the notion that Medieval Spain was a land of convivencia—of Christians, Muslims, and Jews "living together." But it is better to think of it as a land of conveniencia where members of different ethnic and faith communities "came together" and worked together not in the name of some ideal of tolerance but out of convenience—that is, for their own perceived benefit. Even before Tariq's forces had landed in Hispania, he had come to a political understanding with factions within the Visigothic elite.

Although Christians and Muslims regarded each other's religions as ill-founded, they did not necessarily see them as ill-intentioned, and they understood that they all worshipped the same God. The Christians, Muslims, and Jews who lived around the Mediterranean all shared in a common culture grounded in Abrahamic monotheism, Persian and Greek learning, Roman institutions, Egyptian esotericism, a common sense of history, and folk traditions and cultural mores that had developed as a consequence of thousands of years of trade, migra-tion, conquest, and colonization involving peoples living around the sea and beyond. They moved in an environment of "mutual intelligibility," which enabled them to find common ground despite whatever differences they had, and which made it possible for them not only to communicate but to adapt and appropriate each other's cultures.

And they were driven to do this out of necessity. In the complex and diverse environment of al-Andalus and the Mediterranean, the exercise of power was facilitated not by eliminating one's enemies but by co-opting them. Al-Andalus was successfully established because its Arab Muslim overlords were able to obtain the collaboration of the Visigothic nobility and the church, to give them a formally legitimate place within their new society, and to integrate them in their political project. Once they forced the natives into submission, the conquerors were able to "win their hearts and minds."

The same can be said for the Christian princes, who four hundred years later in their era of conquest subjugated and integrated Muslim minorities in their new kingdoms. This was not done out of a sense of magnanimity or solidarity, but out of necessity—the

conquerors needed their subject minorities to maintain their prosperity, and the subject minorities needed to come to accommodation with their new rulers in order to survive. The principle operating here was pragmatism. Once these relationships were established, they would be periodically renegotiated, and as long as the subject communities were regarded as useful and nonthreatening, their rights would be respected. When that ceased to be the case, repression was all but inevitable.

In any case, the individuals who inhabited al-Andalus and the Spanish kingdoms that succeeded it did not see themselves only as Christians, Muslims, and Jews. They were members of ethnic communities and social classes; they were inhabitants of neighborhoods, towns, and regions; they were practitioners of crafts, trades, and vocations; they had common spiritual, intellectual, and philosophical inclinations; and they were men and women—modes of identity that crossed confessional lines. As a result, although religious identity may have framed their experience and the formal laws under which they lived, it did not determine how they saw the world in every circumstance, or who they saw as either enemies or allies. People embodied all sorts of social identities simultaneously, and the fact that many of these crossed religious lines engendered social solidarities that helped sustain diversity.

Freud conceived of the human mind as comprising three elements: the superego, the ego, and the id. The ego is the aspect of our intellect that gets things done, that observes our surroundings, assesses our options, and executes a plan of action designed to accomplish goals that we feel will give us concrete benefits. The id represents our unbridled libido and our intuitive desires, unconstrained by conscience or consideration. And the superego is that conscience, the policeman of our personality, which tells us what we should do and how we should understand the world around us. Formal religious identity is analogous to the superego. But, although we may aspire to follow the dictates of our conscience, we rarely do. For the most part, we are led by our ego, which inhibits our baser urges but also suppresses our higher ideals

and thus enables us to obtain the practical outcomes we need to survive and prosper.

And this is how religion functioned in the social and political landscape of al-Andalus. The principalities of Islamic and Christian Spain in the Middle Ages were "kingdoms of faith" in a very real sense. Religious identity framed their institutions and provided a foundation for their laws and guidelines for policy. But this did not necessarily translate into political action. Rather, the practical demands of political survival meant that as often as not, policy ran contrary to the very precepts these formal ideologies espoused. Muslim kingdoms regularly allied with Christian kingdoms to attack fellow Muslims and vice versa on the basis of expediency, affinity, or mere circumstance. And religion functions analogously on an individual level. Even deeply pious individuals often do things that defy the moral mandates of their faith, either for some material reward or for no other reason than because it gives them pleasure. This does not necessarily diminish them or their ideology, it simply makes them human.

So, if one thing emerges out of the history of al-Andalus, it is the complexity and ambivalence of the individuals who inhabited it, the individuals who, however strong their faith, were not merely "Christians," "Muslims," and "Jews," but people. Consequently, this is a history of faith, curiosity, generosity, and creative spirit, but also of violence, pettiness, cruelty, greed, and hypocrisy. Arab al-Andalus was no Shangri-La of open-minded tolerance, nor were the Christians and Berbers who destroyed it barbarous philistines. There were no "good guys" and no "bad guys" on the civilization level, and few on the individual level. Power is ugly and violence inevitable. There are no moral lessons to be learned here.

But there is a social lesson, perhaps. And that is that differing religious ideologies and cultural orientations are not necessarily impediments to mutual respect or mutually beneficial collaboration. People of diverse origins, affiliations, and brands of conscience can not only cooperate but even embrace their differences if they do not feel threatened by one another—as long as they believe that their goals overlap and complement each other, and as long as they are willing to set aside their own moral presumptions and regard each other's beliefs as well-intentioned, even if mistaken. We have tended to look at the history of Muslim and Christian Spain as nine hundred years of unremitting conflict caused by religious difference, but in fact, it can be seen as nine hundred years of creative engagement that took place despite religious difference. And that, if nothing else, should be enough to give us all some small measure of faith. <>

The Religious Polemics of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia: Identity and Religious Authority in Mudejar Islam by Mònica Colominas Aparicio [The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World, Brill Academic, 9789004346352]

The Religious Polemics of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia examines the corpus of polemical literature against the Christians and the Jews of the protected Muslims (Mudejars) preserved in Arabic and in Aljamiado (Spanish in Arabic characters).

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The Religious Polemics of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia is about the polemics of the Muslims of late medieval Christian Iberia. It is a study of their literature against the Christians and the Jews, and an inquiry into the discourses on Islam revealed in these works. Before entering on the subject, I would like to provide the reader with some essential information about the presence of Muslim communities in the Christian territories. This presence extends from approximately the eleventh to the sixteenth century and begins with the Christian conquest of large parts of the Muslim territory of al-Andalus (often referred to as "the Reconquista"), when many of the former inhabitants were made subject to the new Christian rulers. By swearing allegiance to the new rulers by treaties of surrender or capitulations when their territories were conquered, Muslims were officially allowed to practise Islam publicly and became part of a growing majority Christian society which, like the society in al-Andalus, consisted of three religious communities, Muslims, Christians and Jews. However, in this case not Muslims but Christians were the dominant group in the political and the economic domains. These Muslims and their descendants are commonly known as Mudejars.

The use of the term Mudejar (mudajjan, from the Arabic dajn, or 'treaty') is rarely found in late Muslim and Christian medieval sources. It occasionally appears in Muslim sources, especially from the fourteenth century, in Christian sources c. 1462 CE and in the context of the Conquest of Granada, with the double meaning of "the one who remains behind, a laggard, and of 'tributaries' ". Later, Mudejar was first widely used by nineteenth-century art historians and later by historians more generally. Apart from this usage, Mudejar is employed either to refer to the arts and crafts produced by the members of these communities or, in a broader sense, as a concept with 'aesthetic' significance which stands for all kinds of cultural expressions resulting from the contacts between Christianity and Islam, not only in the Middle Ages but also in the present day. Hence, such scholars as Guillermo Gustavino talk about a cultural 'Mudejarism' which would extend beyond the seventeenth century. At the other extreme, other scholars, among them Márquez Villanueva, venture as far as to consider one of the works written by Christians living under Muslim rule in al-Andalus (Mozarabs) as an early example of Mudejarism. A present-day case of 'Mudejarism' is the novel Makbara by the Spanish novelist Juan Goytisolo. It is worth noting that the Mudejars did not refer to themselves as anything other than simply Muslims. Taking these considerations into account, Mudejar will be used throughout this book to refer to those Iberian Muslims who, as individuals or as communities, lived as Muslims within a

majority Christian society, and to all cultural artefacts they produced.

The rights of the Mudejars were understood as part of a feudal system which regulated religious difference by taxation. Scholars hold different views about the taxes paid by the Mudejars. Whereas Leonard Patrick Harvey points out their close resemblance to the tax called jizya levied on the non-Muslim subjects of a Muslim state (dhimmīs), Kathryn Miller notes that the similarities between the two levies lessened as the Middle Ages progressed, because at times agreements were broken or changed. The free Muslims living under Christian rule (franci) were exempted from paying taxes to the king, either because of their wealth or because they claimed to have a secondary affiliation to a noble, or to an ecclesiastical or a military order. Nevertheless, in all cases, the king (and sometimes the queen) had ultimate jurisdiction over all his Muslim subjects and the Jews—who were the other important religious community in the Christian territories. Both communities were considered to be "the royal treasure". The Mudejars were liable for other kinds of taxes and levies which were paid either to the local lords or to the ecclesiastical authorities, and to the king; and this varied over time and by place. Moreover, taxes varied depending on whether they were imposed on Muslims or to Jews. The dispositions regarding the Mudejars, and the restrictions imposed on their communities, paralleled those imposed on the Jews but were not identical to them. Christian dispositions towards the two minorities seem to have played an important role in the relationships between Mudejars and Jews, as each rivalled the other for the favours of their Christian rulers. The competition between Muslims and Jews is illustrated in one of the capitulations of the Treaty of Granada signed in 1491ce between the last sulṭān, Muḥammad xii (Boabdil), and the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella. This agreement stipulates that the Jews cannot collect taxes from the Muslim communities:

> "Their Highnesses would not permit the Jews to have power or command over the Moors, or to be collectors of any tax."

Given that the vast majority of Mudejars lived in the Iberian Peninsula, it is a truism to say that their

history is inextricably linked to the contextual political, economic and social changes in these territories. Without neglecting the contextual distinctiveness of the various Mudejar communities, some leading scholars distinguish three phases in the history of Mudejarism in medieval Iberia. The first stretches from the eleventh to the thirteenth century and is characterized by the emergence of the first Mudejar communities in the newly conquered Christian territories, mostly in Aragon, the Kingdoms of Castile and León and the north of Portugal. Some scholars posit the hypothesis that, in this period, the Mudejars could have even been a majority in some regions. Then comes a period of strong Christian expansion which leads to an increase in the number of Muslims submitting to the emerging Christian kingdoms. The third and last phase is marked by a decrease in the Mudejar population, decimated by famine, war and plague, followed by the recovery and later prosperity of the Mudejar communities until the first half of the fifteenth-century. From 1480ce onwards, the deterioration in the conditions of the Mudejars seems to have been particularly evident and the Mudejars faced increasing pressure and restrictions exerted by the increasingly intolerant Christian society.

At the outset, the treaties or capitulations signed between the Christian kings and their Muslim subjects were generally respected and, apart from sporadic incidents, the Mudejars were fairly well integrated into society. The Mudejar communities, or aljamas, had their own governance systems and judiciary—namely: their own religious leaders (imām) and those in charge of the call to prayer (muʾadhdhin); their own judges (qāḍī) and religious scholars (faqīh); their own mosques (masjid), schools (madrasa), and cemeteries. The judge or qāḍī was in charge of making the final decisions in the community, but the religious authority of the leaders of the Mudejar aljamas was often concentrated in the hands of the faqīh. Although sensu stricto a faqīh is an Islamic jurist, he fulfilled various functions within the Mudejar aljamas, including that of imām or prayer leader. The religious leaders of the aljamas could also be actively involved in politics and be integrated into the administrative

structures of Christian government. Mahoma Xarafí, or Sharafī, for example, held the positions of faqīh and adelantado in 1473 CE. Adelantados were appointed directly by the king of Castile to administer parts of the kingdom in his name. The role of some Mudejar community leaders in both Christian and Mudejar government and the interventionism of Christian authorities in the imposition of penalties established by Islamic law and in the relations between Mudejars and Jews indicate that the Christians certainly had the final to say about the Mudejars, but the aljamas still functioned in a semi-autonomous fashion. It is also worth noting that Mudejars, Christians and Jews tended to live near each other in neighbourhoods which had no physical barriers prior to the fifteenth century. In this respect, Molénat refers to the disputes over the occupation of the houses in Toledo, and notes that there was no separated Muslim morería in the city, and that, until the fifteenth century, Muslim houses were found among those of the Christians.

However, conditions changed over time and the Mudejars faced increasing restrictions on their personal rights and their de jure cultural and religious freedoms. Beginning in 1499 CE in Granada, and continuing in the Crown of Castile in 1502 CE and in the northern Crowns of Navarre and Aragon in 1516 CE and 1526 CE, the Mudejars were forced either to convert to Christianity or to emigrate. The new converts who remained in the Christian territories until the edicts of expulsion were known as Moriscos, a term which, as Harvey rightly notes, emerged with the "compulsory conversions in the Kingdom of Granada (1499–1502 CE), but it was in the year 1526 CE that the term became applicable in all lands of the Spanish Crown." The Moriscos often were Christians in name only and adhered to the observance of their Muslim faith in secret. They were later persecuted and finally expelled from the country in 1609–1614 CE. It is therefore inaccurate to set the surrender of Granada to the Catholic Monarchs in 1491 CE, or 1502 CE, when the first forced conversions occurred, as end-dates as some scholars do. Instead, the general consensus is to date the Mudejar period from the Christian conquest of Toledo in 1085 CE by Alfonso vi to the

last edict of conversion of the Aragonese Mudejars in 1526 CE.

Eastern and Western Muslim legal scholars (faqīhs) disapproved of the Mudejars dwelling outside Islamic territories (dār al-Islām). From the surviving legal opinions, or fatwās, issued in response to Mudejar questions about whether Muslims were allowed to live under Christian rule, two different approaches can be distinguished: a "pragmatic line" and an "uncompromising" or "hard line". The fatwās of the Andalusī legal scholar Ibn Rabīʿ (d. 719 H/1320 CE) and the North African al-Wansharīsī (d. in Fez in 914 H/1508 CE) are representative of the latter attitude. They stress that it was a Muslim's duty to flee Spain because, by remaining under Christian jurisdiction, religious contamination would be inevitable. This follows from the understanding that being a good Muslim was subject to the strict adherence to the rules of the sharīʿa (Islamic law), and that only the subjection of the individual to a Muslim ruler could guarantee compliance with these rules.

Other scholars, among them the twelfth-century Tunisian Mālikī al-Māzarī, adopted more pragmatic standpoints. Al-Māzarī was quite negative about Muslims travelling to Christian territories for commercial purposes but accepted the soundness of the legal decisions of the Mudejar Sicilian qāḍīs. As Abou El-Fadl states, he distinguished between residence in the Christian lands in general and the individual ethical qualities of the believers. The Mālikī jurist al-ʿAbdūsī (d. circa 849 H/1445 CE) also placed authority in the hands of the qāḍī if the community, or aljama, itself appointed him. Other contemporary fatwās, such as those of the Chief Judges of the four Sunnī legal schools (or madhhabs) in Cairo around the year 1510 CE, held similar viewpoints with regard to the Mudejars in the Iberian Peninsula. Moreover, there is some evidence that the religious leaders of the Mudejar communities themselves occasionally approved of their living in Christian lands. This is the case of one Mudejar muftī quoted by the thirteenth-century Malaga jurist, Ibn Rabīʿ (d. 719 H/1320 CE), who relies on prophetic traditions to claim that living in Christian lands was allowed as long as the central

duties of Islam, the ʿibādāt, could be performed. These inter-madhhab divergences provide evidence not only of the well-known variations between the schools of jurisprudence, or fiqh; they are also an indicator of the complexity of the dilemmas regarding the Mudejars and the intricacy of their exceptional position outside the Islamic jurisdiction of the dār al-Islām. In the eyes of the Muslim jurists, the Mudejars were an exception to the norm and scholars did not develop an independent branch of Islamic law pertaining to minorities (fiqh al-aqalliyyāt) to deal with a situation which they considered anomalous and temporary. More importantly, the Mudejars' exceptional status does not seem to have affected their Muslim identities, and their belonging to the transnational community of believers (or umma) was never questioned: as far as their co-religionists and they themselves were concerned, the Mudejars were Muslims in the full sense of the term.

This study is concerned with the ways in which the members of the Mudejar communities negotiated their religious identities against the background of the multiple and at times conflicting loyalties described so far. It focuses on the Mudejar literature of religious polemics with the Christians and the Jews preserved in codices written in Arabic and Aljamiado (Romance in Arabic characters). The polemical works of the Mudejars are not entirely unknown to scholars, as the nineteenth-century catalogues of Moritz Steinschneider and Gustav Leberecht Flügel among others, show. However, for a long time the focus of research has long been placed either on polemics produced in al-Andalus or on polemics over an extended period of time. Certainly, at other times, scholars have focused on the study and edition of a single polemical text. There are some exceptions to this rule, such as the monograph by Louis Cardaillac about the polemics of the later converts to Christianity, or the Moriscos from the fall of Granada until the mid-seventeenth century. It is very much the question whether the views of Cardaillac on the subject can be still maintained for two reasons: firstly because of some constraints imposed on scholars by access to the sources and proper cataloguing of the manuscripts and secondly in the light of the most recent advances in the field. Moreover, some publications

have dealt with polemics written by Mudejars, but as far as I know, no monograph has yet been dedicated to the Mudejar polemics as a whole.

The discovery of Mudejar manuscripts in such towns as Hornachos, Ocaña, Calanda, Seròs and Cútar after the demolition of some houses, the majority secreted between the walls or under a raised floor and in many cases hidden by Moriscos from the authorities, has been a very important advance in the field. These manuscripts have brought new insights into the life and culture of the members of these communities and of their agency in constructing their political and religious affiliations. Scholars have shown an increased interest in incorporating these and other texts in Aljamiado and Arabic into alreadyexistingaccounts onthe Mudejars mainlybased onChristian sources. This interest has become even more pressing, especially since the number of documents in Arabic pertaining to these communities in Castile, Aragon and Valencia appears to be higher than had hitherto been assumed. This assertion is not only valid for recent findings but is equally applicable to Aljamiado works thought to have been composed by the Mudejars and the Moriscos and already in circulation in Arabic and probably composed by Mudejars. The important contribution to the literature of the Moriscos by the prominent historian Leonard Patrick Harvey includes works which might have circulated among Mudejars and whose Arabic originals have yet to be discovered. An example of this is the work entitled Kitāb Miftāḥ ad-Dīn [The Key to Religion] by Muḥammad al-Qaysī, whose Arabic original has been studied by Van Koningsveld and Wiegers. Previously, we had only the Aljamiado versions of this work, but evidence shows that an earlier Arabic version had been in circulation among the Mudejars. On some occasions, Mudejar manuscripts have been erroneously attributed to the Moriscos. One example of this confusion is two texts about travellers to the East in which the later translators rendered the Arabic term for Mudejar as "Morisco", perhaps with the connotation of Spanish Muslim.

Mudejar Polemics
The study of the extant polemical works written, copied or adapted by the Mudejars either in

Arabic or in Aljamiado is a very suitable instrument through which to provide insight into the identities of Mudejars as Muslims. This is especially so because the Christian ordinances, the local laws or fueros (local charters, carta-puebla), royal privileges and inquisitorial reports or prosecutions are all of great importance in discovering the practicalities of being a Mudejar and a Morisco, but these sources say very little about the inner life of the members of these minorities.

Above all, it is essential we know which manuscripts form the corpus of the Mudejars' polemical literature but the first step is to pose the question of what we mean by "religious polemic". The word has recently been defined by scholars of religion as a virulent (and even violent) written or oral attack against someone else's arguments or beliefs. It usually refers to a situation in which there are two or more contenders who hold fairly rigid and/or dogmatic points of view and whose main purpose is to deprecate the opponent. These ideas are common currency, but recent studies such as that by Jesse Lander note that they have modern roots: "polemic" as a discrete category has emerged as a reaction to the modern ideas of dialogue, discussion and literature; all concepts to which polemics are unequivocally opposed. Usually scholars have uncritically adopted the existing meaning to address polemics in the Middle Ages but, as the study by Alex Novikoff illustrates, it is very much the question whether contemporary conceptions of polemics are best suited to that end. This is not only because of the specific and modern origins of the term, but also because the relationship established between violence and polemics by some authors limits the Mudejars' polemical treatises simply to attacks on their religious opponents and obscures our appreciation of their role as tools in the self-government of the Mudejars which buttressed the internal cohesion of their communities, and furthered the practice of Islam.

An example of how this corpus might shed light on the performative contexts and the Mudejars' own understandings of polemics and of Islam is the following argument in one of these treatises. A Mudejar author attempts to refute the claim of the

Jews and the Christians that Ibrāhīm (Abraham) was a Jew merely because "he was born in the land of the Jews, that is to say Judea". He refutes this by saying that, "not everyone who lives in Toledo is a Jew; in [the city] live Jews, Christians and Muslims" and he adds that, "[i]t is for this reason that someone who lives in Toledo calls himself Toledan and, if there are many, they call themselves Toledans." This polemic contains various references to Toledo, which suggests that the city was seen by this author as an exemplary case of a multi-religious society and, moreover, that the claim of religious affiliation on "local" grounds could have had a wider currency in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula. The claims of this Mudejar are part of a larger argument whose purpose is to show that "location" is not a determinant of religious affiliation, and that belief and practice are central to the determination of whether someone is a Christian, a Muslim or a Jew, instead. We shall see below that such a claim was of great importance to the Mudejars in authorizing their residence in Christian lands but, at this point, it is important to note that the reference to the city of Toledo in which not one, but three religious communities live together shows the use of polemical treatises to negotiate community boundaries and power relations between communities in the Christian territories.

A most significant aspect in this example is that the Mudejar polemicist also cites verses from the Torah to support his claims and, hence, he seems to refer to scriptural evidence and to evidence of the same rhetorical power emerging from the social relations between Christians, Muslims and Jews to convince his audiences. He argues about a well-known topic of religious controversy using non-religious language, a strategy also illustrated in the arguments (probably not unfamiliar to the modern reader) stated in the following passage of this same polemic. "'You know'", claims the Mudejar polemicist as he addresses the Christians, "'that God's condemnation of Adam and his wife did not disappear with Yasū''s death'. '[This condemnation is made clear in light of] the pain felt by women during childbirth and their mockery of husbands, which occurs today as it did in the time of Adam.' " It is very much the question whether childbirth and

marital relationships are equally successful in explaining the idea of "sin", but, no doubt, these two examples are illustrative of how the polemicist provides an answer to religious claims by stressing the conciliatory role of Jesus in this respect and by locating it as part of a socially embedded rebuttal.

The proximity between the Christian, Muslim and Jewish populations in the Christian territories could be an explanation of the references made by this Mudejar to a reality which he clearly assumes was well known among his religious opponents. Daily contacts could have prompted the vilifications of the Christians, who call the Mudejars "dogs" in the same treatise. The author retorts with arguments based on ritual purity and claims that the Christians, not the Mudejars, are "dogs" because they are the ones "who consume blood, walk around without being circumcised, without being in a state of ritual purity and who eat carrion." The differences in social status of the three religious communities could also be a mainspring for polemics and the Jews and the Mudejars seem to have kept up a certain degree of competition between each other which can be observed, for example, in conflicts for pre-eminence at public events such as the festivities organized by the Christians. Likewise, the Muslims did not want the members of the Jewish minority communities to exert any control over them, as is illustrated in the Treaty of Granada. Furthermore, the more privileged position of some members within the own community was also a source of conflict. We see this in the attack on the Mudejar alguacil (or the officer of the court) of the Mudejar community of Atajate, in Málaga, who was in charge of collecting taxes for the Crown of Castile at the end of the fifteenth century. He was disparaged by his co-religionists: "disyéndole que hera christiano e que tenía vendidos a los moros" (saying to him that he was a Christianandthat hehad sold the moros out). The accusation levelled at the Mudejar alguacil of being a Christian and, moreover, of betraying his own community for personal gain is grounded in the high fiscal pressure exerted on the Mudejars after the conquest of the Kingdom of Granada by the Catholic Monarchs.

These examples show that disputes about socio-economic disagreements between Christians, Muslims and Jews were sometimes articulated in religious terms and these polemics were then transformed into mainly religious polemics. They suggest that polemics were not only theologically oriented but also seem to have become expressions of the socio-cultural dynamics between religious communities in the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula. This postulation is consistent with recent scholarship which regards disputation and polemic as part of the Christians' cultural practices in the Middle Ages and the early modern periods. In the light of these considerations, hereafter I would like to approach polemics as those oral or written interactions which, with or without verbal violence, oppose the beliefs or standpoints of an adversary by using systematic arguments. The interactions in these works are dialectical (namely, they are bi-directional) and can include two or more parties, and can attempt (and eventually, succeed) in convincing either the adversary or the group to which the polemicist belongs. In all cases, they function as devices of identity construction of the individuals and groups involved. My "definition" is deliberately broad as it is meant to be a point of departure for the analysis which follows and which will be explained below. Moreover, it will be revised later.

Scholarship on the Mudejars and Their Literature

Since the nineteen seventies, a large and growing body of literature has investigated daily life in the Mudejar aljamas, and since then scholarship on the Mudejars has evolved into a well-established field of research. This is in part thanks to the numerous publications on the subject (by far the most numerous in Spanish, French and Portuguese), and to the scholarly efforts which have led to valuable comprehensive surveys of the Mudejar communities. Nonetheless, this has been carried out more consistently in some areas such as Aragon or Valencia. Together these studies have provided important insights into such issues as, for example, geographical location, prosopography and the organization of the Mudejar communities and of their urban spaces (morerías) during the gradual expansion of the Christian kingdoms; the scope of the duties and responsibilities of the religious and judicial institutions of the aljamas, as well as the

various occupations of Mudejar individuals; the changes in the Christian legislation on their communities and on the taxation rates; the Mudejars' hierarchies; their influences in the field of arts; their daily contacts with the Christians and the Jews; and their Islamic practices, including their pilgrimages to Mecca. To all this can be added the valuable initiatives made by various institutions, Internet portals and web resources. For example, the Centro de Estudios Mudéjares, the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, the web Alhadith developed at Stanford University by Vincent Barletta, the web of the 'Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes' or blogs such as that of David A. Wacks.

Over the last ten years, publications on the Mudejars have dealt with three major areas of interest to students of Islam: a) the functioning of the aljamas as social bodies; b) the transmission of knowledge, more particularly Islamic knowledge, within these communities; and c) the relations between Muslims, Christians and Jews. One of the most significant changes has been not so much the topics covered, but the approaches and theoretical tools used which have produced some instances of co-operation between various fields of research (such as Medievalism, Arabism, Religious Studies, Linguistics, Hispanic Studies, and others). Greater insight into the religious beliefs and practices of the members of the Mudejar minority communities has been possible mainly thanks to the new evidence provided by the study of their material culture (in particular, the archaeological excavations in mosques and cemeteries) and of Mudejar manuscripts. These studies have provided evidence about the practice of Islam and the use of Arabic in Castile until the end of the fifteenth-century and early sixteenth century. Questions about Mudejars in Castile, but also about Aragon, have become closely integrated with the Mudejar elite, more specifically with the Mudejar legal scholars faqīhs, who seem to have played an important role in the composition, copying and transmission of legal and religious treatises within their communities. The survey of a corpus of Arabic and Aljamiado primary sources from fifteenth-century Aragon by Kathryn Miller shows the various ways in which these scholars gave their co-religionists advice on

legal and religious matters; how they created and maintained contacts with other Muslims both inside and outside the Christian territories of the Iberian Peninsula; and how they preserved and transmitted Islamic knowledge. Moreover, the various activities of these scholars, working as they did on the periphery of the main Muslim centres of their time, provides evidence of their strategies to secure religious authority through the exercise of individual agency, social networking, teaching, preaching and polemicizing. These scholars kept close contacts both with each other and with the centres of learning in contemporary majority Muslim lands in order to preserve the Islamic practices of their co-religionists. Serving the same purpose, they wrote, copied and transmitted legal and religious treatises. The studies byVan Koningsveld have indeed shown that the religious leaders of Mudejar communities constituted the most important milieu for the dissemination of Islamic texts. All this seems to indicate the need to revise current assumptions about the marginality and "minority" status of the Mudejars. The Mudejars are no longer viewed as a "deviation" from an "orthodox" Islam which needs to be addressed by comparison to—and always at a disadvantage to—Islamic beliefs and practices in majority Muslim lands: their groups have begun to be seen for what they are, namely as Muslims whose communities are worth study in and of themselves.

This is inline with understandings that ethnic and religious minorities are not only directly affected by majority policies, but that those communities have an impact on the identity of the majority society as well, a perspective which could serve to reconstruct the past of the religious minorities of Europe to gain a greater understanding of its relations to the Islamic world in past and present times.

Main Questions and Chapter Overview

The present study builds on recent scholarship and addresses the Mudejar religious polemics in terms of their contribution to identity discourses. The available sources and historical data about the Mudejars are approached in an interdisciplinary way which combines insights from Social Identity

Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis. This departs from the conviction that language is a major mechanism in the process of social construction and that the language in the polemics echoes the discourse dynamics of Mudejar minority communities. In particular, I focus on the Mudejars' reliance on the Arabic corpus and on change in their polemical arguments, and emphasize the contextuality of their works. This is in line with the views of Norman Fairclough that changes in discourse (and, hence, in language) and social changes are dialectically interrelated and that discourse figures in social practices "in the constitution of identities". I am therefore inclined to follow Nirenberg, who argues for this period that, any inherited discourse about minorities [read here: about polemics] acquired force only when people chose to find it meaningful and useful, and was itself reshaped by these choices. Briefly, discourse and agency gain meaning only in relation to each other. [...] Thus when medieval people made statements about the consequences of religious difference, they were making claims, not expressing accomplished reality, and these claims were subject to barter and negotiation before they could achieve real force in any given situation.

When it is applied to the study of religion, Nirenberg's approach comes close to the views of Islam of Talal Asad who sees it as a "tradition", especially as a "discursive tradition". Heavily indebted to Foucault, "tradition" in Asad's view is essentially composed of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history. These discourses relate conceptually to a past (when the practice was instituted, and from which knowledge its proper perfor-mance has been transmitted) and a future (how that practice can best be secured in the short or long term, or why it should be modified or abandoned), through a present (how it is linked to other practices, institutions, and social conditions).

Accordingly, Islam can be studied as a "tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present." Or, in other words, Islam rests upon a set of statements which are constitutive of reality and

grounded in practice. Consequently, it follows that I should look at how existing discourses were employed and, hence, changed in different ways and under different conditions. I am particularly interested in questions about identity in the face of the constraints resulting from the Mudejars' subjection to the Christians and their competition with the Jews in the economic and social spheres. These questions include looking at what polemics— their language, audience, transmission and consumption—tell us about the mechanisms by which the Mudejars established and negotiated their intergroup relationships with the members of the other two religious communities. My purpose is to understand how frameworks of religious authority enshrined in treatises of religious polemics helped the Mudejar leaders to secure the governance of the a jamas in religious matters and to authorize residence of the Mudejars outside the Muslim lands. In other words, I want to determine the contribution of the literary corpus of religious polemics to Mudejar Islam.

The principal question which runs like a common thread through this study is: in their religious polemics how did Mudejar authors articulate ideas of identity and religious authority (1) in relation to the Christians and the Jews and (2) in their own communities? In order to provide answers to these questions, I address a number of sub-questions, among them are: which manuscripts form the corpus of the Mudejars' polemical literature and what place do these writings hold within the Islamic tradition in general, and the traditions in al-Andalus and the Maghreb in particular? Furthermore, what do these works tell us about identity and religious authority, in particular the authority of the religious leaders of the Mudejars, and their approaches to Islam?

The chapters are designed to inquire into these issues. In Chapter One, I provide the background necessary to the discussion of religious authority and identity in the treatises of polemics of the Mudejars. I briefly address three contexts of religious authority and identity in the works of religious polemics of the Mudejars, namely: their understandings of Islamic law, or sharīʿa; the relationships of the Mudejars with the Christians

and the Jews; and the practice of religious polemics within the Mudejar a jamas. In Chapter Two, I discuss the meaning of "religious polemics". Following the scholarship of Lander and Novikoff, I talk about the modern roots of the terms and the main shortcomings revealed in current approaches to the study of religious polemics in the medieval period. Next, I delineate the theoretical framework and methods used in the analysis of the Mudejar corpus of treatises of religious polemics. In Chapter Three, I identify the polemical manuscripts of the Mudejars, and discuss what research has been carried out in the field to date. As noted above, the polemical literature of the Mudejars is a relatively unexplored field and codicological analysis will help to determine which polemical manuscripts circulated among or were composed by the Mudejars. As is the case with some Mudejar Aljamiado polemics, polemics could be versified and poetry could also turn polemical. Moreover, narratives with non-explicit polemical aims could challenge the religious views of the Christians and the Jews. However, I am primarily concerned with treatises specifically designed to refute the religious principles of an opponent or, in other words, treatises in which there is an implicit or explicit interaction between two or more parties. A narrative such as the Historia de Buluqiyyā [The Story of Buluqiyyā] recently studied by Luce López-Baralt, which is one of the narratives of the Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ [Stories of the Prophets], is addressed only on a secondary level since in the Buluqiyyā polemics only operate in the background to a fantastical story which tells of the travels of the son of the ruler of Israel. Among his father's belongings he discoverssome fragments of the Torah which reveal the prophecy of Muḥammad. The same applies to other narratives including the Leyenda de Ibrāhīm [The Legend of Ibrāhīm] and some prophetical writings. On account of the same considerations and for reasons which will be given in due time, I include the conversion narrative of the "demand as de los judíos" in my analysis. The examination of the polemical corpus is used to address the production and consumption of this kind of works by the Mudejars and to construct some hypotheses about who the authors of the treatises of religious polemics under study were.

In Chapter Four, I present an overview of the Muslim polemical literature known to us, both from the Muslim territories and from Christian Iberia. I address polemics in al-Andalus, in the Western and Oriental parts of the Muslim world (known as the Maghreb and the Mashriq, respectively) and in Christian Iberia. I attempt to determine the place of the corpus under study within this tradition, and to disclose the particular characteristics of the polemical treatises of the Mudejars. I pay particular attention to the uses of Muslim arguments against the Christians and the Jews largely produced in Muslim lands during the Middle Ages and to the question of how the Mudejars infused traditional arguments with new forms and meanings by drawing on the contemporary discourses of the Christians and the Jews against Islam and against each other, in the particular socio-historical context in the Christian territories.

In Chapter Five, I focus on religious authority and identity in the Mudejar religious polemics against the Jews and on the possible concomitance between the Mudejars' discourses against this minority and the Christian proselytism and/or restrictive policies imposed on both Mudejars and Jews. To this end, I have placed most emphasis on the production and consumption by Mudejars, namely: the discursive practices in polemical works. I do this by raising such questions as: were the Mudejars' anti-Jewish discourses boosted by the growing anti-Judaism among the Christians which reached its peak in the later Middle Ages and early modern period? Or, can their arguments instead be most readily explained by recourse to Muslim discourses about the Jews? In Chapter Six, I address religious authority and identity, this time in the Mudejars' discourses against the Christians, and against other Muslims. I argue that philosophy figures prominently in the Mudejars' polemical discourses directed towards the Christians and, the fact, that its use in the inquiry into religious topics was controversial among Muslims. In this chapter, I also look at how the Mudejars dealt with the contemporary internal disputes about philosophy as an authoritative source in Islam and a tool in religious polemics. In the last chapter, Chapter Seven, I re-examine the entire thesis and look at Mudejar Islam as a discursive tradition. From this

perspective, I investigate the main mechanisms of identity construction used by Mudejar authors of religious polemics in their refutations of the claims of the Christians and the Jews. I also look at ideas of government and minority in the Mudejar aljamas and at the adherence of the Mudejars to the normative views of the centres of Muslim knowledge at their time.

Chronologically, I focus on the later Middle Ages and geographically on the Crowns of Aragon and Castile because a large number of polemical treatises are dated in this period and to these regions. Although a full edition of the manuscripts is not given, I provide the reader with a transcription and translation of several important passages in order to illustrate my arguments. I made this choice because, even though I deal with a modest number of polemical manuscripts written by the Mudejars, their comprehension, both on the level of language and of content, is challenging. Moreover, my main concern is the articulation of discourses in these treatises. On the other hand, I do provide a detailed codicological description of the Kitāb al-Mujādala maʿa-l-Yahūd wa-n-Naṣārā [The Book called Disputation with the Jews and the Christians] in Ms öNB AF 58, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna; and, in the Annex, I give a transcription and Spanish translation of the Aljamiado version of the Mudejar polemic against the Jews of the Taʾyīd al-Milla [The Fortification of the Faith, or Community], in Ms BNE 4944, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid and of the beginning of the Aljamiado version of the Taʾyīd in Ms BcA I 536, Fondo Documental Histórico de las Cortes de Aragón, Zaragoza. In closing, I have to say that, because of the historical consideration that Spain as a body politic was a reality in the making in the period under study, and, moreover, different languages were spoken in the Peninsular territories, I have avoided the term Spanish and I refer to individuals and languages as Castilian, Navarro-Aragonese, etcetera, and to Romance in case of doubt about the language. <>

Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi by Gregory A. Lipton [Oxford University Press, 9780190684501]

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Prologue
Introduction: Ibn 'Arabi and the Cartography of Universalism

"Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi provides the first critical study of how the great Andalusian Sufi, Ibn Arabi, has been turned into a universalist by modern interpreters. Lipton's convincing intervention demands that we read this central figure in a different way."--Carl W. Ernst, translator of Hallaj: Poems of a Sufi Martyr [Northwestern University Press, 9780810137356]

"Lipton's mastery of Ibn 'Arabi's writings in some ways mimics the Sufi tradition's own internalizing techniques, but he does not simply reconstruct and assess Ibn 'Arabi's thought, but performs a very delicate and painstaking archæology of Ibn 'Arabi's place in European scholastic Sufism and the broader politics of perennial religion. This is a must read for anyone interested in the European appropriation of Sufism and the vagaries of translating Sufi thought for the West."--Tony K. Stewart, Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Chair in Humanities, Vanderbilt University

"Using critical discourse analysis and careful study of primary sources, Lipton raises provocative questions about scholarly approaches to the work of Ibn 'Arabi. Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi not only places Ibn 'Arabi's thought within its social and historical context, but also challenges the way we think about translation and interpretation, which--Lipton reminds us--are never ideologically neutral undertakings."--Cyrus Ali Zargar, author of The Polished Mirror: Storytelling and the Pursuit of Virtue in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism (OneWorld Publications]

"Gregory Lipton's Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi is a crucial intervention in the studies of Sufism more particularly and mysticism more broadly. No matter how we imagine to be simply reading medieval texts directly, we are always reading these texts

through a framework that is also shaped by our own theoretical lens. Lipton's work reminds us that our categories of universalism and mysticism are shaped also by the categories of the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly those shaped by profoundly problematic racial categorizations. It is a work that is urgently recommended for all scholars of Sufism, Islamic studies, and comparative mysticism."--Omid Safi, Professor of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Duke University, Trinity College of Arts and Science

Excerpt:

[Rethinking Ibn 'Arabi](#) owes its existence above all to my many mentors and teachers, whom I cannot thank enough or adequately. I must begin by expressing my gratitude to Carl Ernst, who served as my advisor throughout my graduate studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has been my principal mentor in both the academic study of religion and Islamic studies; without his perceptive guidance, kind patience, and remarkable character, I could not have begun this work. Second, I must thank Omid Safi for his many years of generous support, laser- beam insight, and stunning example of walking with love in academia. Thank you as well to Tony Stewart, who tutored me in the nuances of theoretical writing as a beginning graduate student and has offered constant support ever since. I must also thank Juliane Hammer and Cemil Aydin, who, along with Professors Ernst, Safi, and Stewart, served on my dissertation committee at UNC and provided critical feedback while this book was still in its initial phases.

With respect to the study of Ibn 'Arabi in particular, which is what originally drove me to graduate school, I must first and foremost thank my longtime friend and mentor Bilal Hyde for introducing me to Ibn 'Arabi's thought more than twenty years ago. In the same breath, I must also extend special gratitude to my beloved friend and teacher Manzarul Islam, whose patient guidance over the past decade in both the study of Ibn 'Arabi and the Arabic language is a gift beyond price. My deep gratitude also goes to my dear friend and colleague Cyrus Zargar. In addition to his critical insight regarding my engagement with

Ibn 'Arabi's thought in general, his more than generous help in reading through and commenting on the majority of the translations in this book has been invaluable. Here, I must also express my heartfelt gratitude to Gary Edwards and Adel Gamar for their many years of scholarly advice and encouragement.

> In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map. —JORGE LUIS BORGES, "On Exactitude in Science."

Excerpt: While my ostensive concern in this book is to analyze how particular ideas of the medieval Muslim mystic Ibn 'Arabi have been translated within a contemporary field of interpretation, the meta- subject that frames this analysis is the larger issue of religious universalism. And while my approach is necessarily critical, I am not overly concerned to weigh in on the ongoing debate regarding the ontology of religion itself— that is, whether or not religion is "of its own kind" (sui generis). Yet, it seems fairly clear to me that the related, and likewise ongoing, scholarly struggle to find a universal definition of religion is well- nigh impossible. This is so, as Talal Asad has persuasively argued, "not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes." For the methodological purposes of this study, I thus profess a type of philosophical quietism where my general aim, in Wittgensteinian fashion, is to take account of "language- games, describe them, and sometimes wonder at them." In the following chapters, I therefore attempt to remain at the level of discourse by asking how those ideas and ideals we privilege as religious are conceived, received, and ultimately naturalized. More specifically, I seek to show how the speculative metaphysical ideas of

Ibn 'Arabi have been read, appropriated, and universalized within the discursive context of Traditionalism or the Perennial Philosophy (philosophia perennis) with a primary focus on the interpretive field of Perennialism associated with the sui generis, or "nonreductive," tradition of religious universalism connected to Frithjof Schuon.

Thus, even though this book takes seriously claims of religious terra #rma— that is, religion "as such"— its analytical concern revolves around the discursive "maps" that chart such claims. Of course, the metaphor of mapmaking in the field of religious studies is well worn, made famous many years ago by J. Z. Smith's seminal essay "Map Is Not Territory." Smith's essay ends with his oft- quoted rejoinder to the mathematician Alfred Korzybski's famous dictum, " 'Map is not territory'— but maps are all we possess." Yet, Smith's cartographic metaphor is equally applicable to the religious practitioner in the so- called real world as it is for the scholar of religion in the academy. In performing what he calls a "deep"— and indeed "transgressive"— reading of Smith's essay, Peter Wright has recently emphasized this essential point:

> The student of religions . . . is not all that different from the practitioner of a religion. The practices of reading and writing, interpretation and criticism— i.e., the practices that . . . constitute for Smith the study of religions as a humanistic adventure among texts— belong to the same family of activities that constitute ordinary religious practice. The scholar of religions and the adherent of a particular religious tradition are both engaged in a quest romance that produces a species of "cartography."

Thus, while there may be what scholars like to think of as a "critical distance" between the academic discipline of religious studies and the object of their study— the religious themselves— it nevertheless appears to be a difference of degree rather than of kind.

One of the ways that the differences among such maps have been categorized is by orders of abstraction away from the original "insider map of believers." Yet, when dealing with contemporary scholars of religion who consider their own

scholarship a vehicle for spiritual gnosis, as was famously the case with the comparativist Mircea Eliade, then any supposed distance between the academic study of religion and asserting religious truth rapidly vanishes into the thin air of theory itself. As Steven Wasserstrom observes, "Eliade's Historian of Religions himself somehow recapitulated the paradigmatic experience of the traditional believer; only thus could he see the real forms, and therefore only in this way could then show them to the reader." Similarly, in his introduction to The Essential Writings of Frithjof Schuon, religious studies scholar and Perennialist Seyyed Hossein Nasr claims that "ideally speaking, only saintly men and women possessing wisdom should and can engage in a serious manner in that enterprise which has come to be known as comparative religion."

To be sure, the art of mapmaking is an elitist enterprise. As cosmographical projections, maps assert particular correspondences to reality, able to be read and followed by anyone with skill enough to do so. As such, all maps inevitably claim, to one degree or another, the universal through their ability to offer privileged access to truth. In its most unassuming form, such universalism is based on the assertion that territory can be abstracted outside of time and culture— a particular locality can be reified and placed within a less complicated dimension, represented by semiotic simplifications. The usefulness of cartography in the history of humanity is of course beyond question. The notion, however, that maps are reliable representations of reality is more complicated. Indeed, the full quote of Korzybski's popular maxim referred to above reads: "A map is not the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness." One of the best ways of articulating the problematics underlying Korzybski's deceptively simple insight has been dubbed Bonini's paradox by William Starbuck: "As a model grows more realistic it also becomes just as difficult to understand as the real- world processes it represents." This paradox has numerous ramifications in many fields, but for my purposes here it is useful to consider what it brings to bear on the concept of the universal. The closer we

approach any notion of "reality," the more complex such ideas are, and increasingly less useful. The idea of the universal, like a map, is only of use when it simplifies reality; yet, when reality is simplified, there is always a choice involved— something must always be left out. Thus, the paradox of religious universalism is that all such discourse simultaneously reveals and conceals: the more it shines light upon a claimed universal perspective, the more it occludes others. As Milton Sernett observes:

> Perhaps psychohistorians will someday explain for us why the archives of the past overflow with examples of how religion has, on the one hand, served as a cross-cultural unifying principle while, on the other hand, it has been a means by which insiders define themselves over against outsiders.

Even though universal perspectives are useful as models of unification, they are also necessarily divisive as discourses through which specific communities operating within particular times and places stake out their claims. In this sense, as Ernesto Laclau put it, "the universal is no more than a particular that has become dominant." Yet, from a metaphysical perspective, the fact that universals are derived from so- called particulars does not necessarily diminish their universal status. In the case of universalizing religions such as Christianity or Islam, historical particulars constitute much of revelation itself. But to argue that such particulars can become universally applicable is not necessarily to argue that they transcend their particularity. Rather, part of the paradox of universalism is an inherent confusion between the universal and the particular, as Laclau observes: "Is it universal or particular? If the latter, universality can only be a particularity that defines itself in terms of a limitless exclusion; if the former, the particular itself becomes part of the universal, and the dividing line is again blurred."

The concern that fuels the theoretical impetus behind this book thus focuses on universalist mapping practices that tend to lose sight of— or simply disregard— the inherent, dialectical tension between the universal and the particular as conceived within all religious discourse. As a

pertinent example of this, and one that I revisit in chapter 4, the Perennialist scholar James Cutsinger recently asserted that to be objective, scholars of religious studies "must entertain the possibility" that Frithjof Schuon was able to directly access "the Truth— with that capital 'T' " in ways that are not explicable through "sheerly natural causes or purely human phenomena." Cutsinger goes on to make the even bolder claim (coming as it does from a professor in a religious studies department at a public research university) that such a gnostic "power of immediate or intuitive discernment [is] unobstructed by the boundaries of physical objects and unaffected by the limitations of historical circumstance." Taking Cutsinger's definition of gnostic power at face value, it stands to reason that if "limitations of historical circumstance" could indeed be shown as constitutive for any given transcendent claim to universal knowledge, then such a claim would necessarily be called into question. Thus, setting aside the thorny question of ontology, and in response to Cutsinger, the contention that threads together the various arguments throughout this book is simply this: all universal claims inevitably carry the burden of their own socio- historical genealogies. That is to say, every map bears the situated perspective of its cartographer.

In regards to my personal cartographic perspective, one final note is in order. In terms of the field of Ibn 'Arabi studies, the insights contained in this book are critically indebted to two of the most formidable, contemporary scholars who write on Ibn 'Arabi in European languages: Michel Chodkiewicz and William Chittick. In the last several decades, their immeasurable contribution has enriched and transformed how Ibn 'Arabi is read and understood. Both scholars are at pains to articulate the importance of sacred law for Ibn 'Arabi— a point I revisit from different perspectives throughout this work. No doubt, they would also agree that Ibn 'Arabi's discourse would qualify as universalist in some fashion. Yet in terms of critically inspiring my particular theoretical interposition, Chodkiewicz has importantly, albeit discretely, brought to light the absolutist and exclusivist nature of Ibn 'Arabi's particular brand of universalism in opposition to Chittick's more

inclusivist interpretive framework. In the first half of this book, I spend significant time fleshing out this particular aspect of Chodkiewicz's wideranging insight, while critiquing the aspect of Chittick's work that has seemingly attempted to attenuate what I refer to as Ibn 'Arabi's political metaphysics and its embedded supersessionism. Yet, any critique of Chittick I proffer here must be understood as situated within a larger indebtedness owed to his prolific and careful expositions of the Andalusian Sufi's corpus. Without having encountered and benefited from Chittick's extraordinary erudition, I could never have begun my ongoing journey of understanding and appreciation of Ibn 'Arabi's work and thought. I thus offer the interventions of this book not in the spirit of opposition, but as additional vantage points to a necessary and ongoing conversation. <>

Essay: The Paradox of the One from Christian Jambet's *The Great Resurrection of Alamut*

from "L'un paradoxal," in Christian Jambet, La grande résurrection d'Alamut :

In 1090 CE, Hassan Sabbah, the leader of Ismailites in Iran, chose the Alamut region as his headquarters to campaign, preach and convert new followers. This proved to be a turning point for the destiny of Alamut Valley. The result of over two centuries of Ismailite stronghold, the region witnessed numerous castles throughout, of which at least 20 "castles" dating back to this era have been identified. The most magnificent castle in the Alamut Valley is the Alamut Castle, which is built on top of a high rock reaching 2163 m above sea level near the Gazor Khan Village. The rock is 200 m high and covers an area of 20 hectares (49 acres); with its steep slope and deep and dangerous ravine, the rock is practically inaccessible and forms a part of the fort's structure. Currently, only ruins of the fort and some towers are apparent, and it is only through archaeological excavation that the main portions can be discovered.

Today, the leader of the contemporary Ismaili community is the Aga Khan.

The Necessity of Neo-Platonism

The event of the Great Resurrection is the culmination of history; it fulfills, in the eyes of the Nizari Ismaili, the destiny of man in both supernatural time and the time of nations. But this perfection is also a liberation. The appearance of the Resurrector releases his faithful from the obligations of the law in order that they may experience an entirely spiritual existence, which is the truth of the paradisiacal state. It would be, in our view, inexact to perceive this liberation as exhausting itself in the simple disappearance of constraints. Perhaps we would be gravely mistaken in opposing the qiyâmat [resurrection] period to the sharî'at period, as if the one would be content to efface the bonds that the other had imposed. Certainly, a liberty is substituted for a constraint. But this liberty is not exhausted in the power to do what had been forbidden. It projects those who adopt it into another space and confronts them with another logic, another theology. The resurrection is the experience of liberty, not simply because it effaces the law, but because it manifests the divine essence.

The Ismaili of Alamût experienced the power of their liberty in the contemplation of the divine unity, finally stripped of its sails. Their joy, their exaltation, and ultimately, the new obligations imposed upon them by their completely new existence — this whole set of behaviors and feelings belongs to the greatly varied history of the forms of liberty. It is important that these feelings, this elation, the weight of the fallen chains, the rectified body which abandons the ritual gestures of obedience, this set of features in which one of the rare and beautiful moments of liberty is

recognized — it is important that all of this was experienced in the encounter with the One.

The unity which, in being contemplated, liberated the men gathered together in this confined community was primarily concentrated in the figure of the Lord of the Resurrection. But, beneath this face, the feeling of liberty really depended upon the presentation of divine unity.

This is why we are unable to truly comprehend the messianic act in which this manifestation took place without seeking recourse to its metaphysical conditions of possibility or, more precisely, to the ontology that is implicitly staged by such an event. Thus, we must now ask ourselves what the divine essence must be and how it must be thought in order that the sudden emergence of its unity in the shape of man, or of a man, may be intelligible.

This interrogation is all the more legitimate given that the Ismaili thinkers themselves did not fail to expressly found the messianic act of the resurrection upon a theology and cosmology which formed an impressive metaphysical edifice. It is rare to see such a close correspondence between a rigorous philosophy and a historical experience of liberty.

Ismaili philosophy underwent many successive developments, and it is not our intention to summarize or even evoke them here. It suffices for us to question two of the most prominent theoreticians and show how, not without differences, they bring us closer to the real upon which the experience of Alamût can be founded. These two metaphysicians are thinking on the horizon of neo-Platonism. There is, on the one hand, Abû Ya'qûb al-Sijistânî (who, following the Persian pronunciation, we will call Sejestânî) and on the other, Nasîroddîn Tûsî. The first is a dâ'i, which is to say, a Fatimid missionary. The second is a witness to the fall of Alamût. They are situated, respectively, at the beginning and at the end of this history. Despite their profound lexical or doctrinal differences, they are connected, and their choice here is justified — for the purposes of understanding an event that Sejestânî never knew of, and that Nasîroddîn commented on as a fait accompli — by a common passion for the

ontological foundation of the particulars of their faith.

I would like to draw the reader's attention to this fact, which I find essential: if there is any moment in the history of Ismailism that strongly resembles the proclamation of the Great Resurrection, it is certainly the end of the third/ninth century. As we briefly recalled in our introduction, those we called al-qarâmita, the Qarmatians, were awaiting the return of the imam Mohammad b. !smâ'îl. They made themselves feared through their tremendous military incursions, and made themselves hated by the majority of the Muslim world when they removed the Black Stone from Ka'ba. And yet, it is in the intellectual milieu of the Qarmatians that Sejestânî's master, Mohammad b. Ahmad al-Nasafî, composed his Kitâb al-Mahsûl. [1] He completely reformed Ismaili theology by introducing the neo-Platonism which became the henceforth obligatory frame for the metaphysical thought of Ismailism. It strikes me as highly suggestive, then, to see this time as combining an exigent quest for the Day of Resurrection and the abolition of the law, a tragic experience of liberation, and the adoption of a neo-Platonism that makes possible an intense meditation on the One. Sejestânî's treatises, saved from the disaster in which his master's works perished, are the most proximate to this tragic experience of the Qarmatians, even if Sejestânî is, for his part, a dâ'î faithful to the Fatimid branch. His treatises are not far, in their existential tone, from the pages of Nasîroddîn Tûsî, which are tributaries of the experience of Alamût. They express, in effect, a similar concern for the messianic act and for its causes lying in the ontological structure itself.

It is no less suggestive to note, in these two cases, the following philosophical fact: in order to problematize a messianic event, whether it be a fervent premonition or already experienced, it is necessary to interrogate the nature of the One, the nature of the procession of existents [existants], and also to interpret the messianic event according to the laws of engendering the multiple from the One. Why was this theoretical schema so necessary?

It seems to us that there are two simple enough reasons for this. First and foremost, the neo-Platonic

schema of the One and the multiple permits the One to be situated beyond any connection with the multiple wherein it would be totalized or counted as one. The One is thought beyond the unified totality of its emanations in the multiple. On the other hand, freed from any link with the totality of the existent [existant], and situated beyond Being [l'être], the One can signify pure spontaneity, a liberty with no foundation other than itself. In this way, the sudden messianic appearance of the Resurrector will be founded in the creative liberty of the originary One; thus, in the necessary reign of the existent, the non-Being that results from the excess of the One will be able to mark out its trail of light.

But, conversely, this creative spontaneity will also explain the creation of the existent, the ordained and hierarchized formation of universes. Just as much as with the unjustified liberty, the One will be able to justify the procession of the intelligible and sensible, and the gradation of the spiritual and bodily worlds. Avoiding dualism, all while thinking the duality between the One and the order of Being which it interrupts; conceiving, on the other hand, of the unity of order and creative spontaneity — all while preserving the dualist sentiment — without which the experience of messianic liberty was impossible: this is what neo-Platonic thought offered to the Ismaili.

The key to such a theologico-political structure is the concept of the imperative, or command (al-amr). By borrowing it from the lexicon of the Qur'an in order to introduce it into the neo-Platonic schema, the Ismaili thinkers made more than a simple theoretical modification, and constructed something better than a philosophical and religious syncretism. It is thanks to the concept of the imperative that the free spontaneity of the One founds the messianic appearance, and it is thanks to the concept of the command that universes can be founded in this same primordial divine unity. Command and imperative, an imperative whose underside is the command itself, such will be the concept that we will have to situate. The Ismaili conception of an unsayable liberty, which is to say a real liberty, depends upon it. It is within the imperative that the unsayable is knotted to the real.

The Great Resurrection of Alamût was the historical experience of this imperative. Human liberty was experienced as the expression of the originative [instauratrice] spontaneity and unconditioned liberty of God. The abolition of legalitarian religion, the culmination of history, the superexistence [surexistence] at the heart of a living community in a state of spiritual resurrection, the extinguishment of ancient obligations and divisions, and the sole duty to recognize the exigency of divinization, the proof of an event wherein the infinite becomes accessible and is made into the very soul of life: such are the facets of a freedom that is quite strange for us.

The Ismaili experience of liberty is not the discovery of the autonomy of consciousness or the political rights of the individual. It is the feeling of a different and powerful idea: liberty is not a moment of Being, and it is even less a piece in the game of the existent. Liberty is not an attribute, but rather a subjective affirmation without foundation. Liberty is not a multiple effect of the One, but it can be nothing but the One, disconnected from whatever network of constraints it engenders or by which, on the contrary, it would come to be seized. Liberty is the experience of this non-Being of the One, through which the One inscribes itself in the universe of both Being and beings [l'étant] as pure alterity.

But, in order to support such a schema of liberty and the One within the thinking of the imperative, the Ismaili needed a religious vision of the world. The experience of liberty is not made possible here by the distance man would impose on God. On the contrary, it is identified with the manifestation of the divine essence, with the imperious condition that the divine essence be beyond Being. The liberty of the men in the experience of Alamût was this revelation — taken seriously — that the first real, the foundation of all reality, is not itself a reality. The foundation rests on no foundation. Indeed, this is what is proper to foundation when considered in its essence. But that it eludes its own status, that it frees itself from itself, from what remains in it of an originary ground, or from a point that is attributable to some reality — this is the radical gesture of Ismaili thought.

The presence of the Lord of the Resurrection demonstrates the infinite void of the deity. That which the Platonic sage contemplates in the ecstasy to which he was unable to lead his companions in ancient slavery is, here, what a communitarian life would like to make into a permanent exercise. That which scintillates beyond all naming will have, for the time being, to await the great day of the communitarian ideal in order to be named. The Ismailians' experience is indissolubly linked to the religious vision of the world, because this vision alone permitted them to encounter the One beyond Being. Thus, it is not in spite of God but in combat with the unnamable unity of divinity, with the unsayable of divine liberty, that the Ismailism of Alamût offers us the spectacle of a superhuman attempt at liberation.

In order to be unburdened of the ordinary constraints in the subjugated town, the Ismaili community identified its way of life with the expression of the divine imperative and the infinite liberty of the principle. By bringing themselves closer to God rather than breaking away from Him, they attempted to overcome the law of this God, which, in any case, said nothing that was not desired by God, who in the form of the Resurrector was henceforth made more manifest than He had ever been under the aegis of the law. Let us ask ourselves what kind of face this God must have had that they wanted to be so near to, to the point of deciphering it in the human person, naming themselves "muqarrabân," "Those Brought Near" [Rapprochés]?

It is in order to respond to this question that neo-Platonic thought became necessary very early on for the Ismaili. This was not a chance philosophical dressing-up, the kind of coating that some scholar would put on a pre-constituted theology, but rather a restrictive schema without which this theology would not have been able to clearly think through the messianic event and its consequences for subjective life. Without this schema, there is no subject, no proof of liberty. Only a neo-Platonic conception of the One, structured around the powers of the imperative, could allow the Ismaili to free God from all attachments to Being as well as beings, and to think him in the dimension of the infinite. But, conversely, this neo-Platonic schema

can overturn itself and become the complete order of reality. Humanity can then be thought of as the manifestation of, and privileged receptacle for, the imperative. It can devote itself to a fate other than one of submission to some supreme being: the exemplarity of creative spontaneity and primordial divine origination. In consequence, humanity would have to pay the price that this liberty carries with it: another type of submission, no longer to Being or some figure of beings, but to the order originated by the pure act with which it had identified itself, thereby turning the spontaneous liberty it had discovered into an infinite obligation. It is this movement of liberty transforming into its opposite at the very moment of its appearance, and this movement of an obligation identified with liberty at the moment of its imposition, which we will now attempt to understand.

An Examination of Kashf Al-Mahjûb

Abû Ya'qûb Ishâq b. Ahmad al-Sijistânî, or al-Sijzî, is one of the most important Fatimid Ismaili authors. He lived during the middle of the fourth/tenth century. According to S.M. Stern, he must have run the jazîra, or mission territory, of Khorâsân, following the death of his master al-Nasafî, after having been in charge of the Ismaili organization in Rayy (where the dâ'îs of Mosul and Baghdad were under his command).[2] He was, without a doubt, still alive in 360/970.[3]

The work of this high-ranking dignitary cannot be overestimated, and his study "is absolutely indispensable, because he is our principle source for the Ismaili philosophical doctrines of the fourth/fifth century."[4] We do not intend, however, to examine him as a historical source. Through the following reading of one of his treatises, The Unveiling of Hidden Things [Le Dévoilement des choses cachées],[5] we hope simply to highlight the metaphysical approach that was born out of the fusion of Ismaili theology and neo-Platonism. We also hope to demonstrate the conceptual edifice it constructed, emphasize the ontology that supported it, and situate the central role played by the imperative in this ontology — or, more precisely, henology. Indeed, the metaphysics of the creative imperative during the time of Alamût retained the power it had acquired during the inaugural phase

in which Sejestânî played a foundational role. Of course, we will see modifications and inflections, but we can only judge them on the basis of the completely radical henology that we shall now try to present. We are proceeding according to a guided reading of the Unveiling, but not without mentioning Abû Ya'qûb's other texts when it seems necessary, and not without lamenting the absence of a collected study on such a crucial author.

The Unveiling of Hidden Things is composed of seven chapters, which are in turn divided into seven "investigations." The first chapter is entirely devoted to showing the true nature of God, or rather, to demonstrating that he has no nature, that he possesses no Being, and that he does not belong to the domain of existents with whose Being he does not identify.

The second chapter, "In memory of the primordial creation," is on the topic of the Intelligence, which is the primordial originated [l'instauré primordial]. The third chapter deals with the second creation — the universal Soul — whose constitutive members are human souls. As logic would dictate in this procession, after the Soul comes the third creation, Nature, whose examination occupies the fourth chapter.

The fifth chapter is not about a distinct stage of creation, but it explores the world of species, which is internal to Nature, the world of the "nativities," the world of the three kingdoms (mineral, vegetable, and animal), as well as the laws governing the relations between these species and the individuals that comprise them; it is an elementary treatise on physics.

The sixth chapter concerns the fifth creation — the prophecy — and the cycles of the prophetic mission. It concludes with an important meditation on the special function of Jesus, the son of Mary. This meditation transitions into chapter seven, "in memory of the sixth creation," which deals with the resurrection and its authentic meaning. This resurrection supposes a Resurrector who completes the last cycle of the supernatural history of humanity. This is not the topic of only the last chapter for, in truth, its veiled presence supports all of the theses that touch upon the resurrection. If Sejestâni is able do without a completely deployed

Imamology here, it is because he will have questioned it in the exegesis of Jesus' role, since the function of the prophet Jesus is defined by the esoteric meaning of the resurrection.

This outline leaves nothing to surprise. At first sight, it is composed of three unequal parts: a first chapter dedicated to the unity of the Creator and the unsayable principle of all reality. Four chapters, then, explain the procession of the expressions of the imperative, which is to say the divine word, the Intelligence, the Soul, and Nature. Finally, two chapters speak of the prophet and the resurrection, which is to say that they speak about the exoteric (religious law, apparent reality) and the esoteric (role and effects of the Imamate). In truth, three implied structures allow us to discover the intrinsic order here.

a) A first structure clearly isolates the first chapter, dedicated to the principle, from the six other chapters, which are all devoted to one aspect or another of creation. The total number of chapters, seven, is homologous with the seven cosmic cycles, the seven imams of each cycle, and so on. But the number six is no less charged with meaning. It is, Sejestâni tells us, a perfect number: "From this we are led to understand that the six periods (of the cycle of prophecy), from the age of Adam to that of Mohammad, each in its own time, produce the spiritual Forms, the perfection of the Call (da'wat) of each period's prophet, and the perfect proportion given to his message by the Qâ'im, without which the component parts (of each period) exceed the number six.'" The procession of the six creations — the Intelligence, the Soul, Nature, the natural species, the prophet, and the imam — is, thus, isomorphic with the succession of the cycles corresponding to the six major prophets — Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammad — and thus with the history "in heaven," which determines the Earthly history of humanity. This homologation, governed by the number six, repeats itself as follows: the six days of creation, the six energies (movement and rest, matter and form, space and time), the six sides of a volume in space, the six parts of man (two hands, two feet, the back and the stomach). Just as the seventh part of man is the head, in which all of creation is summed up, so too must the first chapter bear upon the One who

governs the body of creation and makes it live "unto the imperative."

But we can still discover a second structure, this time organized as a function of the preeminence of the Imamate, which isolates and emphasizes the figure of the Messiah and the theory of resurrection. In fact, while still preserving the unique position of the principle, it is possible to read the first six chapters as the exposition of the procession, from the One beyond Being up to the prophet and the Imam. There is an obvious continuity at the heart of this set formed by the exposition of the principle and its expressions, while the seventh chapter reveals the meaning of this set, the destination of the procession, the universal conversion of Being which is only made possible by the efforts of man. The generative source of universal eschatology is the perfect man, for whom the act of being is merged with his resurrection. This eschatology responds to God's call to his creation, and it transmutes the whole universe into a perfect mirror of the One. Sejestânî's book is thus a bipolar one wherein, depending on the point of view, either the first or the last chapter gives meaning to everything, like two poles reflecting one another.

Finally, the third structure. There is nothing strange in the fact that a rupture is produced following the long-awaited procession of the Intelligence, the Soul, and Nature. We are no longer talking about one or another of the immaterial hypostases, but rather two integrated figures, who are indeed external existents but ones who, in order to live, need to become flesh in this physical world: the prophet and the Imam. Indeed, we must remember the similarity that our author has pointed out, in the Book of Springs [Livre des sources], between the Christian cross and the profession of faith in Islam.[7]

Let us recall what Sejestânî emphasizes there: a structure with four terms, four "supports of unity." The two "spiritual prototypes," the Intelligence and Soul (aslâni), and the two "foundations on Earth," the prophet and the imam (asâsânî). They are divided up thusly: the imam is likened to the foot of the cross, while the piece of wood extending from it is like the Intelligence; the left arm of the cross is homologous with the Soul, and the right arm with

the prophet. These four terms exhaust the invisible and visible, celestial and Earthly, principles.

In his prologue, Abû Ya'qûb insists upon the intention that guides him: it is a matter of refuting "the masters of perdition" who "liken the Creator to the created."[8] They believe that they are able to speak of the unknowable, of divine ipseity, and think they can define its essence by enumerating its attributes. They attribute an essence to God. Such is the association they make between the Creator and the creature: community in the possession of an essence. But the true attitude consists, on the contrary, in stripping God of all essence. The only legitimate knowledge [savoir] rests upon this fully assumed unknowing [inconnaissance]. Knowledge, henceforth, concerns the hierarchized degrees of creation, the angels, men, the resurrection, the totality of universes, and the infinite richness of the existent. But the condition of such a science is precisely the unscience [inscience] of that which does not figure as an object of knowledge — the principle. The pretention to know God in the way one knows a thing has the correlate impact of a negligence in the exploration of worlds, of numbers, and of beings. Sejestânî's Ismailism is, all told, the experience of a non-knowledge [non-savoir] and the production of a multiplicity of knowledges [savoirs]. Non-knowledge is the foundation of knowledges, just as the One is the originator of existents. In accordance with these necessary and legitimate knowledges, Sejestânî gives men the ethical duty "to become consubstantial with gnosis," "as the movement of the fire is inseparable from the fire itself."[9]

The Problem of Divine Essence

The tawhîd is an attestation, the recognition of what exactly the unity of the Creator consists in. We must, consequently, understand what the One is, not as one number among others, but in that which absolutely separates it from the chain of numbers. Our analysis will excise everything from the One that contradicts its power. To this end, we must remove from it the property whereby existents posses an essence.

The technical term, which Islamic philosophy will trivialize when it comes to designating essence, is al-dhât. So, for Avicenna, "it is the term that best

renders the general idea of what a thing is, in a profound and intimate manner, but without considering it from a particular point of view."[10] The word al-dhât in Avicenna's work will gradually take on the clear meaning and univocal usage that it will retain in the subsequent history of Islamic philosophy. But it will never be the sole designation for the essential Being of a given reality — all the more reason why it is not yet in its standard usage with Sejestânî. In order to say that essence is excluded from the Creator, he makes use of the notion of reity [réité], or thingness [choséité] (tchîzî in Persian). The concept of thingness for him is, first of all, strictly equivalent to that of essence: thingness names essence, but in a slightly different manner than the word al-dhât. The latter term puts the accent on the innermost center of a thing, on what the thing under consideration truly is. Essence (al-dhât) is the response to the question "what is existent?" (in Greek: ti to on). It is what Aristotle calls the ti esti, as the determination of ouisa.

This is why when one speaks of essence, one is inevitably led to enumerate certain attributes, to explore properties, to verify differences. This is also why a theory of essences leads to a theory of genres, of species, and of individuals, since essence is never defined any more precisely than as taking part in a certain order, due to inclusion in a collection. A theory of essences opens outward to conclude in a doctrine of classification.

Of course, Sejestânî refuses the proposition that God, conceived in his extraessential unity, possesses attributes, that he is subjected to an order, and that he would be the supreme term of classification. The Persian word tchîzî, like the Arabic word al-dhât, names essence quite well. But let us be carried onward by the semantic charge of the word thingness.

What is a thing? It is an existent, but not just any existent. It is the existent conceived as an object. It is what one can hold, manipulate, or contemplate. It is the existent, such as it is placed in the universe according to a certain configuration. To say that God has no thingness is to affirm that nothing in him can be made graspable, manipulable, or observable in the manner of a stone, a statue, or some other thing. Which, consequently, is to say

that God has no objectivity, that he is not an object, and that he can only be a subject. Rather than insisting upon essentiality, the very concrete term thingness insists upon the petrification of Being. The thing succumbs to a certain configuration, which is a limitation on it and a determination though which the spontaneity of the real is debased, until it is lifted up in beings.

Essence, conceived as thingness, is the character of that which is apt to constitute itself in the real in the mode of "the thing." Henry Corbin wrote in a note in the Book of Springs: "It will concern particularly the shay'îya (tchîzî in Persian, literally, reity), an abstraction derived from shay' (thing, res) which, precisely because it results from an operation of abstraction, presupposes the operation of the Intelligence."" Thingness is infinitely concrete, since it always falls under something that it is possible to grasp, and it is infinitely abstract, when understood as the essence of the thing. It becomes a pure abstraction of the mind which will define what characterizes the beings that one might encounter in the world of creatures. Knowledge determines the reity of the thing, it isolates this essence on the one hand, and leaves the fact-of-Being [fait-d'être], the esse, as a remainder on the other. The residual thingness, then, indicates this fact-of-Being rather than participation in an order, which is the determination at the heart of a classification.

Thingness is not simply the source of possession, intimate to this reality being conceived, the unified source of qualifications and modes, a permanence solidly contained within a hierarchy, an ontic mastery. It is, rather, the fact of being some thing, the fact of being presented in Being as an effectuation of the esse. The thing, qua thing, is distinguished from the other-than-self not primarily by its characteristics or attributes, but by its singular position, its sturdy configuration. It has a certain shape, it enters into the universe through the fracture caused by its act of presence. This is why reity, thingness, is just as much the act of existing as it is essence. It is the passage from the one to the other. By denying that God possesses a reity we are led to remove essence from him, but we also remove the act of being and presence. Even if the Ismaili lexicon sometimes represents the One in terms of a philosophy of presence, the radicality of

Ismaili thought excludes the possibility that God is the presence of himself. Every time Sejestânî says simply tchîz, the thing, he also intends al-wojûd, which in Arabic means existence or the act of being. Thingness is this act of being some thing, of undergoing the passage into the existence, within the Being proper to the thing, of some intelligible essence. Reity is the fact-of-Being, essence as the effectuation of the esse, joined with an existere. It is ousia as much as it is to de ti, as well as as ti esti. The thing, the particular exemplification of esse, is thus indissociable from the existent; it is indissolubly knotted to its act of being.[12]

Sejestânî barely differentiates here between essence and the concrete existent since it is not important to distinguish that which exists from its essence, but rather to carefully discern the solid knot of Being and the existent — which constitutes the thing and its thingness — from that which is no thing and possess no thingness. This poses a lexical problem for Sejestânî. To designate the One, the focal point, separated from all things and deprived of all thingness, irreducible to Being, Sejestânî finds nothing better than the same Arabo-Persian term dhât, by which the tradition will later designate essence! Henry Corbin thus translates it by "the in-itself" [l'en-soi]. We must hear here the real of the One, itself irreducible to any res, to any reality. We will learn, in the explication of the concept of Intelligence, that this is nothing other than reality, which is to say, the first originated Being. Ismaili thinkers thus differentiate between the real and reality, a difference that is designated by the terms dhât and tchîzî in the first chapter of the Unveiling.

Only the One "is separated from all of the things by which we designate that which is created."[13] Let us remark once again that the term tchîzî has this important connotation: to-be-a-thing, which is to have limits. Yet the notion of the limit comes from sensible knowledge. The existent is first presented in the physical form of its surfaces, of its sides. Let us not neglect this aspect of Sejestânî's apophatic reasoning: God is not a thing, he has no limit, because he is not subject to bodiliness — understood not simply as the fact of being a body, but more generally as the fact of being figurable.[14] The real is the infinite. At a time when

the cosmos is a closed-off world, where the idea of an infinite actually existing in the universe seems to be a contradictory representation, it is within the One that the infinite — which is not the indefinite — finds its abode. The One is pure infinity, without foundation or reason, and this is why it posseses no thingnesss that could deprive it of this infinitude.

In the same movement, the thought of the One repudiates both thingness and the membership of the divine names and their attributes in the essential reality of the Originator. To situate God beyond Being is to exalt him over and above his own names. Conversely, to free the divine real from the determinations in which its own attributes would imprison it is to differentiate it from everything that can be presented as a being, or even as the essence of the existent. Shahrastânî summarizes this reasoning extremely well when he writes that the primitive Ismaili said of God: "We say that He is neither an existent, nor a non-existent, He is neither knowing, nor ignorant, He is neither powerful, nor powerless. And the same goes for all attributes. For, truly affirming [an attribute of God] would mean that He and the other existents share the modality that we would say belongs to Him, which is assimilationism."[15]

In a slightly different style, this is also what we read in the Brothers of Purity: God is the originator of existence, no existent precedes him in Being, but the outpouring of his generosity causes all reality to be. That is to say, the real of the One consists entirely in this generosity and infinite power of effusion, which is the Ismaili form of freedom. God sets the supreme limit at the top of the hierarchy of existents (which implies that divine unity is outside of all limits, and that it, itself, is not the initial limit). God is the real of pure origination and he is constituted entirely by his imperative, which brings into Being both the Pen and the Well-Preserved Tablet (the Intelligence and the Soul) — corresponding, respectively, to the Throne and the Korsi.[16]

It is therefore equivalent to say that the One is radically distinguished from everything that can ever come into Being or, on the contrary, that it is entirely indistinct. It is even through its own indistinction that it exceeds the universe of the

existents. That it is beyond any naming is understood in two ways: the One, the divine real, does not lie in the names that it receives, and on the other hand, no name is capable of receiving it. The One is rebellious to all signs, it is unlocalizable: by the eminence of its condition and the force of its domination, it surpasses everything that marks the network of causes upon which the creatural world depends. Reality, for its part, is always marked or distinguished by names, while the One is exalted beyond distinction itself. When we designate the One by particular namings, we are incapable of conceiving its superexistence. The name of the One is the name of the indistinct.[17] This is why the authentic attestation of the Unique is the negation of attributes, whereas the affirmation of attributes is the renouncement of the tawhîd.[18]

The origin of such a negative theology is not a mystery: it has to do with neo-Platonic philosophy. But what philosophy, and what sort of neo-Platonism, are we dealing with here? In order to respond to this question, it would be necessary to establish an exact history of the transmission of Hellenic schemas to Ismailism — yet this is precisely where we are left to conjectures. Nevertheless, we are not left entirely in doubt.

I will formulate the following hypothesis: the neo-Platonism which irrigated Ismaili theology — such as it will have been reformed by al-Nasafi and Abú Ya'qûb Sejestânî — is of Plotinian allegiance. It doubtlessly benefited from the dissemination, more or less contemporary with the reform in question, of the so-called Theology of Aristotle and other texts coming from the Enneads. We know that the Theology is a highly coherent montage, made up of Plotinian treatises assembled by Porphyry in the order of the final Enneads. Is Porphyry also responsible for the original assembly of the Theology? Was it initially translated into Syriac, then from Syriac into Arabic, ultimately to be revised by the philosopher al-Kindî?[19] This work has always played a decisive role in the formation of the metaphysical systems of falsafa, notably in imposing or confirming the schema of a procession of the Intelligence, the Soul, and Nature, starting from the One. And yet, indeed, this is also the schema adopted by our Ismaili "reformers" in the fourth/tenth century.

Two critical revisions of the Theology exist: a shorter ten-chapter version, and a longer fourteen-chapter version, known to the West in its Latin translation. In a well-known article, Mr. S. Pinès — working from fragments published by the Russian scholar Borisov — demonstrated the proximity of this longer version to the theses of Ismailism. Ismaili theology situated the originating function of the Word, or divine imperative, between the One and its emanations (the Intelligence and the Soul). Pinès found this same pairing of the One and the imperative in Borisov's fragments. The Word plays a decisive role there in the engendering of the Intelligence. But this vocabulary of origination and the Word, of the imperative and the sovereign speech of God, is not Plotinian. It intrudes on the Plotinian schema in order to accentuate that which concerns the liberty of the principle, and to incline the whole ontological schema towards the meaning of this liberty. If it is accepted that this is found in one of the versions of the Theology, then it must necessarily be concluded that this is due to a mutual influence of Arab Plotinism — transmitted under the name of Aristotle — and Ismaili theology. On the one hand, this confirms that the Ismaili adoption of the doctrine of the One has its origin in the spread of Plotinism. On the other hand, it must also be supposed that this adoption was not simply passive, but that it led in turn to considerable modifications in the image and doctrine formed out of a procession of the Intelligence and the Soul — beginning with the fact, which was fundamentally new for Hellenic thought, of the Word or imperative.[20]

Could it be suggested, following Pinès, that the long version of Aristotle's Theology was itself the fruit of a work heavily determined by the theological reform of radical Shi'ite thought? Starting from a Plotinian vulgate attributed to Aristotle, could the long version, or its Arabic equivalent, have been rewritten? Could the role of the Word have been emphasized in a general movement of thought in which Ismailism played, to say the least, a stimulating role? In other words, if Ismailism received the definitive structures of its theology from Plotinism between the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, is it not this reformed Ismailism which, in return — by virtue of mutual

contributions, through exchanges we have no trace of except for just a few conclusive effects in a few texts — could have filtered the Plotonian contribution and determined its appearance according to its own ends? With Nâsir-e Khosraw, we see that the Greek sages are called upon to found the authentic doctrine of the One, and to be in harmony with the Ismaili tawhîd.

Procession & Genesis

Thingness is the fact of substances, it is the distinctive feature of existents. They come into Being in the natural world through the effect of a genesis. Sejestânî carefully distinguishes between procession, which only applies to eternally originated beings (the Intelligence, the Soul), and genesis, which is the process of engendering existents that are composed of matter and form. But it must be remarked that the Greek concept of proodos (procession) is itself transformed. Properly speaking, the Intelligence does not proceed from the One, but is originated by the unsayable and free act of the Word, that is to say, the imperative. The Soul, in turn, is originated by the mediation of the Intelligence. There is a procession of the Soul starting with Intelligence because a mediation exists between them, but it is only through a convenience of language that we say there is a procession of their pairing. Nothing could be effused from the One other than the imperative, the originating act itself. As for genesis (the Greek genesis), its equivalent in Arabic is certainly the term al-tawlîd. Sejestânî performs an audacious exegesis of the Qur'anic verse which denies that God had a son or that he himself had been engendered (a verse which is a refutation of Christian dogma). By transposing this refusal of the tawlîd and genesis onto the level of ontological speculation, Sejestânî demonstrates that the One could not belong to the universe of substances, where everything derives from a genesis. Furthermore, because it is not originated — being itself the originator — the One escapes the two types of engendering that are possible for the existent. "It follows that Being and essence are excluded from it as well": tchîz and tchîzî, the fact of being and essentiality, the characteristic of existing things, the thing understood as the act of existing and thingness, or even as essence.[21]

Let us ponder the significance of this exclusion, of this Ismaili refusal: the One is not, and we must remove from it that which institutes beings in their Being. Is this to say that the One is not real? Not in the least. The One is real because it is not. Or, better put: it is the real by virtue of that which deprives it of essence and existence. We will see that everything which exists is a moment of the intelligible or an expression of the Intelligence, which encompasses the totality of realities, the perfect and complete set of essences. These multiple Beings are unified by the Intelligence, which is itself originated by the real of the One — in this case, the originated One (and no longer the originating One). But this One, which achieves the primordial origination of the Intelligence, is not. Being begins there where the first originated thing surges forth into Being. In this way, to surge forth into Being and to surge forth as Being are one and the same origination. Out of the One — which is nothing, and does not exist — Being itself comes to be in the form of the universal reality of beings, that is to say, Being and its intelligible manifestation in the Intelligence. This whole of reality is every thing, all beings, but it is also the place where Being exits from the unsayable, where it was in no way in supply of itself, where it was not in potential. Being comes to be in the very movement wherein beings are originated by the One which is not.

The One is prior to Being. But it is, just as well, totally immanent in the Being it originates. If it transcended the intelligible Being of that which it first originated, then it would be "another" Being. The One is not another Being, it is not the Being of beings which would be other than the beings whose Being it is [il n'est pas l'être de l'étant qui serait autre que l'étant dont il est l'être]. The One is other than the Being of beings. Thus, it is not localizable with respect to Being or beings, but the One is rather the unbound force of that which is not bound by Being, within the originated which depends upon its non-existent origination [instauration non-étante]. Its result is necessity, its root is liberty.

Universal reality, the intelligible universe, therefore depends upon the inexistence of the One. It is because of this inexistence — not sutured by the One, but liberated in Being by the inexistence of

the One. Totality is always a deterioration, a weaker expression of the liberty of the One, a manifestation in which the One, succumbing to Being in order to effuse it, constrains itself to the translation of the unsayable, that is, the universal. But the ordered set of the multiple moments of the Intelligence (of reality) is unified by that which resists all unification, by that which only allows itself to say "one" with the immediate stipulation of not existing, of not being seized by the register of Being. This must be insisted upon: the One is the foundation of reality, but if it is ontologically prior to Being, and if it modifies all Being with its originative liberty, then it is not present to the beings that it originates. Just as it does not transcend beings, neither is it the quiet presence of Being or the scintillating origin of everything. Being alone is capable of residing, of lying near itself, in the presence-to-self of that which is. In the One, there is not enough Being for a presence to take place. Intelligible universal reality depends on the absence of any place, on the absence of the One, of that which is able to hear itself: it depends on the One as absence, the absent One, the absence of the One. But in every hypothesis, the absence of the One is not merely the other side of its presence.

For the Ismaili, this void at the heart of Being, which supports the eternal origination, is more real than the reality that it originates. Their ontology, it seems to me, borrows the instruments necessary for thinking the opposition between the real and Being from Plotinism. It is within the mutual play of these two poles that the fate of man and the necessity of the messianic event is going to have to be thought.

It would therefore not be fitting to compare the reality of the intelligible — which is the most eminent there is, which includes within itself everything that can lay claim to reality — and the real of the One. This real is not more eminently real than the Intelligence. Intelligible reality is, on the contrary, reality par excellence, the unique reality, the unifying sum of all realities. In this way it is real, absolutely real, Being. Conversely, the One is not absolutely real, it is even more so not the absolute of the real: it affirms the real, through which the absolutely real is originated.

This real, prior to reality, is that through which reality is endowed with its necessity at the moment it is originated in Being. In the origination of reality, the One which is not bestows the mark of "it is so" upon that which is. It is the cause of existentiation, not in such a manner that Being anticipates what comes to exist, but in that the existence originated by the One derives from the non-Being of the One. This existence nullifies the unsayable by passing to the act.

This origination is the real of the One. This real is independence, it is liberty on two accounts. The One is free in itself, and it is liberty in the act of origination. It is free in the real that constitutes it and in the operation actualized by this real, for there is no ontological difference between its real and the originating operation. The One is the liberty of Being, a liberty which is real because it does not exist, because it does not proceed from the One in the manner of that which exists. Liberty does not proceed from the One, but it is the One insofar as it is pure origination. Everything that will proceed from this liberty will come into its own proper necessity of Being, and will freely express the One of superessential and superexistent liberty.

In order for this originary liberty to constitute the One, several degrees at the very heart of unity must be carefully distinguished from one another. Thus, we turn here to the neo-Platonic gradation of the pure One, the One which is, and the multiple-One. This gradation corresponds to the first three hypotheses of Plato's Parmenides. It is clearly present in Ismaili thought, as is borne witness to in the text we would now like to analyze: it is a short chapter of Uniting the Two Wisdoms [Livre réunissant les deux sagesses], a text by the great philosopher Nâsir-e Khosraw.[22] As in the rest of the book, Nâsir-e Khosraw wishes to show the convergence between Qur'anic ontology and the legacy of Greek wisdom. He places the question of the One under the authority of Pythagoras, the "master of the arithmeticians." Pythagoras held, essentially, that the formation of the world is subject to numbers. The numerical hierarchy gives the law of the sequences proper to existents.[23]

This Pythagorean reference is both classical and important. In truth, it signifies that Platonism is the

true ontology, since it is certainly the doctrine of the One and the multiple elaborated by Platonism that we find attributed to Pythagoras here. But it is not unimportant that it is attributed to a mathematician, to the mathematician par excellence. Nâsir-e Khosraw probably intends to establish a homology between existents and numbers: not insofar as numbers are the hidden essences of things — this is certainly the case, and we can find numbers, in order, at the heart of the gradual realities of universes — but primarily insofar as Being best expresses itself in mathematical language. The truth of Being is a matter for the matheme.[24]

Let us examine, first and foremost, the cardinal thesis of Nâsir-e Khosraw: "The origination of the universe in Being comes from the One."[25] Origination here is íbtidâ'. It is not the act which engenders Being and bestows upon it a presentation in beings, but rather the fact of the universe's being originated, being produced in existence. It is the universe's essential property of possessing Being, or of having come into Being. The universe (`âlam) owes this property to the One. Thus, the One is — prior to Being — the giver of Being and the cause of the existent. It is precisely to justify this point that the Platonic schema must make use of the numerical chain.

The origination of the universe in Being is the eduction of the multiple starting from the One, because universal reality is characterized as such primarily by the way it is put into the multiple (mutakaththar): in this reality, matter represents pure inconsistency, while the limit results from the way the forms submit the inconsistency of this indefinitely divisible matter to unity. Multiplicities are the points of tangency between the One and the pure multiple. But if it is true that the universe avoids slipping into inconsistency due to the incidence of the One in the form of each species and each individual, then it is no less true that this formal unity is a determination, or even a limitation. In a first sense, consequently, the One causes the universe to pass into existence because it determines the forms, where each form is an expression of the One that puts a limit on the inconsistent proliferation of the material multiple. The forms are hierarchized, and this hierarchy finds

its reason in the numerical order of the expressions of the One.

Conversely, it will be no less true that the One existenciates [existencie] the world, universal reality insofar as it is universal, which is to say insofar as it rightfully exceeds all limits. Certainly, the universe is physically closed. It closes up the space contained in the sphere of spheres. But it is mathematically indefinite, like the numerical chain. At this precise point, we are confronted with a problem whose solution I do not see as being simple or univocal: does it suffice to say that ancient and medieval physics did not accept the infinite in actuality, that they always respected a certain image of the "closed world," in order to prohibit the infinite from exercising its power within the models that authorize the representation of physical realities?[26] Or, put differently: does it suffice to recall that ancient mathematics does not accept the idea of an infinite numerical set in actuality, and does not define the number by the infinite, in order to then conclude that the ontology relying on a theory of numbers misrecognized the power of the infinite?

Certain distinctions should, without a doubt, be respected. On the one hand, it is accurate to say that each number is a limit, that the One is that which determines, and that the number is the finishing stitch on the proliferation of the multiple. It is not the zero that engenders the series of numbers, but the one. The number, therefore, is not conceived of as beginning with the term designating the empty set, but always as the reflection of a certain plentitude. It would not, however, be completely accurate to understand the One simply in the role of a limit. We must consider that the One situated at the origin of the multiple chain suffers from an internal scission. It does not stop assuming the function of a limit at all levels of numerical concatenation, a finishing stitch put on the multiple, but it also engenders the multiple as multiple. It is indeed the One that is responsible for the fact that the chain is interminable, that numbers can always be engendered, up to the very point of the inconsistency of matter. This rebellious inconsistency within form is itself the ultimate effect of the power of the One. Nowhere is this power exercised with more mastery than at the heart of the inconsistent multiple, where, nevertheless, no

trace of the One is any longer discernable. The One is the infinite power of engendering the multiple, which is given adequate representation and expression only in inconsistency and the void. How can it be denied that there is something in this ontological perspective that exceeds the strict definition of the One as limit, as unifying One? How can it not be seen, consequently, that there is something like a theory of the zero in the Platonic tradition of the One, which is ignorant of itself?

In our opinion, Nãsir-e Khosraw is thinking through the two functions of the One that are thus paradoxically linked; he is trying to think them together, by hierarchizing three concepts of the One that uphold, respectively, inconsistency, the power to engender, and the power to unify.

The paradoxical nature of the One manifests itself, first of all, in the asymmetry of relations between the One and the numbers. In Nãsir-e Khosraw, this asymmetry is expressed in the vocabulary of liberty. This shows its importance for us. The One is "lacking" [en manque] no number, it is "sufficient," it is free. If the numbers did not exist, this would in no way prevent the One from existing, whereas no number would have come into Being if the One did not exist.[27] The infinite power of the One is compensated by the inexistence of the pure multiple, or rather, the identity between non-Being and the pure multiple. The two poles toward which the existent tends — themselves external to the system of Being — are thus nothingness through the excess of the One (the One is not a number, it is not linked to the chain) and nothingness through the inconsistency of the pure multiple (the numbers linked by the chain are not the One). Still, the word "nothingness" is deceptive.

This double polarity is that of the Creator and the universe, of originative liberty and originated multiplicity. Origination, then, will be the eduction of realities in Being, through which the two positions of absolute solitude will be abandoned: the One outside of the numbers, the numbers outside of the One — this is unification, or the formation of the chain.

The One is conceivable in its non-connection with the chain of numbers. On the other hand, the inconsistency that dooms the multiple to non-Being is

the material of unifying origination: the chain of numbers is actually engendered and the world really exists. Therefore, a new concept must be supposed in the One: that of the One connected to the numbers. Nâsir-e Khosraw — citing someone he calls Pythagoras — says that this One is the cause of the numbers. The universe is numbered, and it is a substance which is indefinitely divisible into parts (mutaja»). This divisibility is the implication of the multiple in the One. Consequently, the numbered universe's eduction in Being is the production of the multiple by the One (146).

Let us return to the question of the nature of the One. That it is not a number "like the others," that it is not even a number, caught in the regime of Being and beings — this is what is attested to in its originary position: if one imagines another origin prior to the One, it must still be thought of as the One. On the other hand, the One cannot be divided and cannot be weakened in the way that numbers can be divided. This indivisibility of the One into diverse parts is the condition of its real power. It engenders a divisible multiplicity because it is itself indivisible. In another way, this shows that it is not linked to the chain it engenders, and that it is not connected to the numbers, all of which nevertheless express, to some degree, the power of the One. Nâsir-e Khosraw does not say, then, that the One is, or even that it posseses a Being which is superior to all representation. He tells us that the One only holds up in the real, that it is the real: qa' im ast (14-15). The One is not existent (mawjûd), it is not existence (wojûd), but it is subsistent (qu' 1m) — or more rigorously, it persists outside of the unreal and affirms itself as the pure real. The universe of Being does not begin with the One, which is real, but from the One, whose infinite power subsists outside of Being in such a way that Being will express it in the infinitely divisible effusion of the multiple.

The two concepts of the One that have already been elucidated are, respectively, the concept of the real free from any connections (whose only representation is in inconsistent matter), and the concept of the One connected to the numbers (whose representation is the universal chain of numbers concentrated in the unifying One). This duality is expressed by Nâsir-e Khosraw in the

following pair of concepts: there is unity (wahadat) and the One (wãhid). In Persian, this pair is: yeki, yekî-ye mutakaththar, which corresponds exactly to the One and the multiple-One (147).

Let us consider the second concept of the One, that of the One connected to the multiple chain of numbers. We can no longer think it independently from this chain. There is no subsistence outside of the relation to that which it unifies and engenders. The One does not possess any real. It is, then, no longer the real. To present this connection between the One and the multiple to his reader, Nâsir-e Khosraw is constrained by his philosophical tradition to make use of a very questionable model: the pair formed by essence and its manifestation. Unity, according to this concept of the One, is henceforth connected to the multiple-One. Unity, thus, is by way of the multiple-One, just as the multiple-One is by way of unity: they need each other as black needs the essence of blackness, as soft needs the essence of softness. No softness without its manifestation in that which is soft, no blackness outside that which is black; but conversely, nothing is soft but by participation in the essence of softness. The multiple-One is the universal participation in unity. This is the universe of unified reality, because it is the universe of participation. The chosen model has the advantage, at least, of making us understand how participation, the major difficulty of Platonism, only finds a solution on the level of the multiple-One (147).

The full procession is set forth in the following way: real unity, the One or multiple-unity, multiplicity, and the multiple. Nâsir-e Khosraw calls origination (ibdã') the eduction of the multiple in Being, through the mediation of multiplicity. The origin of this origination is the mobdi', the originator, the One who is the cause of the multiple-One (15). The result of the primordial origination is the first Being (hast-e awwal). This does not translate to: the first being [étant]. It is rather a matter of that which is originarily produced in Being, of that which is, in the same movement, the integral sum of beings, and the Being of beings: hast. In its turn, this first originated Being, the Intelligence, engenders the universal Soul. The Intelligence is the dyad, since it is the One which is — the One manifested in Being

— connected to Being. But prior to this multiple-One or One which is, we find the originator, the One of the origination.

Thus, to conclude, the various concepts of the One are declined in the following manner:

> First of all, there is the One in its pure real (yekî-ye mand), superior to unity itself. Nâsir-e Khosraw opposes this real of the One to the unity connected to the multiple. But in the very interior of the non-connected One, he distinguishes more delicately still between the real of the One and the unity of the One. The pure One and unity thus constitute two distinct concepts, to which origination and primordial origination thereby correspond. Origination is no longer the connection to the multiple, but the engendering of the One that will be connected to the multiple, and from which the multiple-One will proceed. Therefore, there is a third concept of the One: the One of origination. The pure One is the originator of unity, which excludes the possibility that it could engender the chain of multiples or unify it. It is the real in its pure independence. Unity, originated by the pure One, engenders the One connected to the multiple (but which is not itself the multiple-One). Finally, the One connected to the multiple engenders the multiple-One, which is to say the dyad. The dyad (the universal Intelligence) engenders the Three (the universal Soul), which engenders the Four (the universal Matter).

We are saying here that the One is not itself the multiple-One, although it is the originated One. On this point, Nâsir-e Khosraw's text is not clear. On the one hand, it certainly asserts the interiority of the One and its superiority — even though it is the origin of numbers — with respect to the chain that truly begins with the two, the dyad of the Intelligence. But on the other hand, one could defend the thesis that this chain includes the first originated term, the superior limit of origination, which can only be the One connected to the numbers. It is in this sense that the One which is already sees duality appear within itself (148-149).

But let us remember the essential point, which is the tripartition of the concepts of the One. The pure One, absolutely real and non-connected, is ahad in Arabic. Unity, or origination, is wandat, and the One that enters into connection is wâhid. Origination expresses the paradoxical nature of the One: it unifies the multiple, but it is rebellious to any connection to the multiple; it imposes the One upon the pure multiple, but it is beyond any unification and it liberates the infinite power of the real within each determined form. Reality becomes coherent through this origination, but it is also the superior power through which the right of the real — the unsettling inconsistency of origination — can establish itself at the heart of this same reality. Unity (wandat) divides the One (ahad) by the One (wâhid), all while ensuring the origination of the multiple-One. Beyond the One there is the real One, the pure One, which is the subject of no procession, the factor of no determination, but is the unsayable liberty itself.

This deduction can help clarify the following reading of Sejestânî's first chapter. This chapter is presented, at its base, as a commentary on the first hypothesis of the Parmenides: what will there be of the One, if the One is One? Let us recall the consequences that the Platonic dialogue draws from the examination of this hypothesis. If the One must be One, it will not be a whole, it will be figureless, it will be nowhere, it will not be subject to movement (neither immobile nor moved), it will be neither identical to itself nor different from itself, neither similar nor dissimilar, neither equal nor unequal; it will not be within time; in short, it will in no way participate in Being and it will be absolutely unsayable.[28]

These consequences are presented extremely precisely in investigations II to VII: the absence of figure and the exclusion of totality are demonstrated, in the second investigation, through to the negation of the limit.[29] The fourth investigation excludes place, the fifth forbids time, and the sixth refutes Being. The seventh investigation demonstrates that the negation of all attributes must redouble the negation of this negation: the Creator is non-existent (a non-thing) and not non-existent, and so on. Sejestânî holds the line separating the agnosticism (ta' tin that removes

any real from God (and which hypostasizes it in that figure, which is still the nothingness of all things) from the assimilationism (tashbih) that confuses God with one existing reality or another. Indeed, we find here the Platonic approach which desires that the One be neither identical nor non-identical with itself.

The third investigation plays a special role. It first deduces that the One possesses no attributes, by virtue of not being a substantial Being. Sejestânî does not renounce the classical problem of divine attributes and their relationship with divine essence. Divine attributes do indeed exist, but in order that they might exist they must express the qualification of created Being. And yet this created Being, immediately originated by the principle, is none other than the Intelligence, or first substance. Thus, he is permitted to speak about divine attributes and to say that they exist, on the condition that he makes them the predicates of the first manifestation of the principle in Being. But this leads us to shift the emphasis of the problem of the relationship between divine essence and its attributes. The problem loses all meaning on the level of the One, but it gains all of its meaning on the level of primordially originated Being. The key to this theoretical procedure is indeed the concept of origination.

The principle, the One as the subject of origination, is al-mobdî' in Arabic — the originator. This is the only suitable name, for it does not designate any particular essence of the One, but rather the operative power of which this One is eternally the agent.

The originator of Being possesses no form that could be known. It is highly significant that Ismaili thought tightly conjoins these two themes which would seem to a priori exclude one another: the originator is distinguished from all existents and from Being itself because the originator is free of any form. But on the other hand, insofar as it is free from possessing a form and deprived of all essence, the originator can concentrate its real into the pure giving of forms, into the originative operation.

This is the manner in which Nâsir-e Khosraw reasons: everything that is known, all reality,

possesses a certain form, since knowledge is defined by the representation of forms in the soul (tasawwûr-e nafs). An existing reality that would possess no form would be unknowable, yet form — Being — and reality are intimately bound together. This shows that reality requires a giver of forms, a "conformator" (musawwir) that will itself be free of any form. In effect, if the conformator itself possessed a form, it in turn would need a conformator, and so on, ad infinitum. If it is necessary for an ultimate conformator to exist, then it must be deprived of form and unknowable. The first cause of all real formations is rebellious to knowledge.[30] The primordial One is thus quite without essence, without form, without thingness. Confirmation of this does not derive from the negative approach, an apophatic approach to the One. It is not only in its unsayable solitude that the One repels form and distinction; it is also in its originative activity. Essentially, we are understanding the One here as the originator. If it is without form, then it is certainly necessary that its operation, origination (ibdâ'), should have no connection with originated reality. No connection, no community of essence, is produced between what is formed and knowable and the conformator itself, between the multiple-One and the pure One. Indeed, this is why we previously distinguished three different concepts of the One. The pure One insists in its real, outside of all thingness; this solitude expresses itself in the unity which is capable of originating the universe of forms, outside of any connection. And the connected One will, in turn, express this primordial origination of Being through the pure One, which is paradoxically free of any link to that which it originates. In this way, the pure One has no other property than this totally free operation of origination, from which follows the existentiation of forms.

It is inferred from this that the primordial origination of reality takes place without mediation (miyanji). Only the realities already originated in Being (the Soul, the Intelligence, and the Body) are linked and engendered by the mediation of one another. By being, properly speaking, nothing, the real of the One cannot be submitted to this generative law. Origination is not the procession or emanation of realities, with the one following from

the others, and all following from the first reality of the universal Intelligence. Origination is the surging forth of reality though the immediate operation of the real of the One; it is the imperative which causes Being to surge forth as the atemporal event of itself.[31]

The originator is recognized through the Intelligence because it is the effect of its origination, and because the attestation of the unique is, for the Intelligence, the attestation of primordial origination. This origination is what causes the universal reality to be, insofar as it will express the One. On this topic, let us cite a long note by Henry Corbin:

> Never lose sight of the fact that the Mobdî', the principle, the originator of Being, is not the First Being. It remains super-Being, hyperousios, beyond Being and non-Being, or rather, beyond non-Being and non non-Being...The First Being is essentially the made-to-be [fait-être] (hast kardeh). The Mobdî' cannot be a being; it is the to-make-to-be [faire-être] (hast kardan). Hence, the first being [étant] is the first Intelligence, the primordial originated, protoktistos, the first of the Cherubim. That which the philosophers call al-haqq al-awwal would therefore be on the level of this first Being. The double negativity produces a metaphysical gap that must be accounted for if one confronts the cosmogonic schema of the philosophers and that of the Ismaili Theosophs.[32]

We were saying earlier that primordial origination is not procession. In truth, the difference between them will be accentuated by the theoreticians of the reformed Ismailism of Alamût, due to the exaltation of the functions of the divine imperative. But in Sejestânî, things are less clear. Insofar as it is the to-make-to-be, the principle is not distinguished from the imperative and from origination because it is the One, the generative center of all existents, and it is so directly, without mediation, or rather through the mediation of the two substances of the Intelligence and the Soul. We could say that this principle is on the one hand imparticipable, and on the other hand that it is the imperative or divine speech typifying this imparticipability. Origination, meanwhile, is the monadizing activity that gives its

infinite power to the Intelligence. As Proclus writes, in commenting on the analogy between the Good and the sun in the Republic: "For as we refer the sensible multitude to a monad uncoordinated with sensibles, and we think that through this monad the multitude of sensibles derives its existence, so it is necessary to refer the intelligible multitude to another cause which is not connumerated with intelligibles, and from which they are alloted their Being and their divine existence."[33]

The Logical Time of the Attestation of the One

"The originative principle is what [the Intelligence] knows through its very act of being, in such a manner that the knowledge it possesses — through the very act of its Being —of the principle that originates it is the knowledge of the ipseity of that principle. Thus, it is not the case that there is neither existent ipseity, nor inexistent ipseity, outside of that which is revealed [to the Intelligence] through its very act of being."[34]

Let us come back to the structure of logical time implied by this text. What is it that constitutes the ipseity of the One, its effective real? It is not, we know, some essence which would belong to it, independently of all of the other essences. In order for the One to adopt an ipseity, an act must take place. The effect of the act constituting the ipseity of the One is to impose the One upon the real, and to make the One into this real prior to all reality, through which that same reality will be brought into existence. The effect of the intelligible act, which turns out to be the ipseity of the One, is indeed to consecrate the ontological priority of the One. But this act is not the doing of the One. It is an act of knowledge, or better put, of authentic attestation, and consequently it can only follow from the truth operation which constitutes the Being of the first Intelligence. And yet, this Intelligence is rightfully understood as subsequent to the One, since it effuses the One without mediation.

Insofar as it is absolutely unsayable and deprived of ipseity (in the way in which it is deprived of all essence), the One is this real which by no means accedes to Being, even by way of the truth. It possesses nothing that could identify it. In order to accede to the truth of its unsayable ipseity — that

is, in order that it be accessible to unknowing [inconnaissance][35] — within the completely negative approach which determines, at the very least, the truth of its real, it is necessary for the act of the Intelligence's cognition to take place. This act is itself paradoxical, since it does not recognize the positive essence of the One (which possesses no essence at all), but it experiences the extraessential real of the One. Thus, when it is recognized as truth, the real of the One is always-already the effect of an act, as a very first determination. It might seem to be a vicious circle: the One would proceed from the Intelligence, which would proceed from the One. But this circle cannot be closed. The One, beyond its own truth, forbids such a closure. The figure representing the truth, as in the case of the great thinkers of Hellenic neo-Platonism, will very appropriately be the spiral.

Originated from the point of the unsayable by the pure act which effuses the real of the One, the first Intelligence is converted to the One though an act of knowing which truly posits the ipseity of the One. But between the pure unsayable and the real One that is henceforth established, between the pure One and the real unity of this One, there is a distance which is itself unsayable: the distance that separates that which refuses any act from that which is already seized by an act in its very refusal, which is nevertheless established even if only as a pure constituting. The One is known as constituting; it is participated in as imparticipable.

Here we have well in hand the illustration of the paradoxical nature of the One. The One must be real so that the Intelligence may proceed from it, but it is from the Intelligence that the One receives the attestation of its unsayable truth. This dehiscence of the One, which is the operation of its primordial origination, is immediately originated. The act by which the Intelligence knows the unsayable in no way plugs up this division, but on the contrary it expresses it and reproduces its mirror image. This reproductive structure "in mirror image" is essential to Ismailism. Let us retain, for the moment, that what is being thought here will never be the quiet presence of Being, but rather the anticipatory division of the One.

This mirroring effect cannot, in our opinion, be interpreted in any other way than the following: the whole of intelligible reality affirms the real of the One and manifests its own particular exigency of the paradoxical One. As for the One, it always anticipates that attestation upon which it nevertheless logically depends. This is why it is able to see the division we are discussing as anticipating its unitude; it is submitted to the power of the two. The One owes the naming of its truth to an intellective operation, which is the fact of the first Intelligence, the first to effuse the One. Simply to say the One is to be situated "downstream from the One," as if the paradoxical One were scanning the real and marking reality with its touch, when this reality begins to be deployed on the level of the universal Intelligence, and only there. Conversely, the emergence of all reality provokes — at the moment of its coming into Being — this touch of the real, which it will then attest to in its own act of existing. The touch of an inconceivable and unverifiable real, "beyond" all naming, upstream or downstream from itself.

Naming will always be inadequate to the One, because it is naming. Naming always comes belatedly [après coup]. But with the One, we can just as well say that all naming is adequate, because it is its own naming. The One only exists, then, to the extent that it is named by the first Intelligence, and the naming adheres to the form of concrete reality wherein the One's scansion comes to leave its mark.

Thus, it certainly seems to us that Sejestãnî, and the whole of Ismaili thought along with him, makes a clear distinction between the real and reality; this distinction will be taken up again with vigor by Nasîroddîn Tûsî and the theologians of Alamût.

The real is typified by the paradoxical One, whereas reality is organized on the level of the Being and non-Being that structure the forms of the existent in accordance with the first Intelligence, from which the hierarchy of universes will proceed. The real is purely causative; it causes intelligible reality to exist. Reality receives this touch of the real from the One, which will have two interdependent and contradictory effects: on the one hand, the unity that engenders order and

coherence, the pyramid of the species, the regularity of cosmic movements, and the numbers that determine all things, from personal destiny to the cycles of prophecy; on the other hand, the One-effect [l'effet d'Un] that creates the event of the resurrection, that exceeds any numerical chain and subjects the coherence of reality to the experience of a real liberty — in other words, it transfers reality unto the imperative.

[This text is a translation of the chapter, "L'un paradoxal," from Christian Jambet, La grande résurrection d'Alamut (Paris: Editions Verdier, 1990), 139-173. Translated by Michael Stanish]

1. Through his missionary effort, the dã'î Abû' Abdallãh Mohammad b. Ahmad al-Nasafi (or al-Nakhshabt-i), a native of Bazda, a village near Nasaf, earned the adherence of important dig¬nitaries of the Samanid state, in Transoxiana, and even emir Nasr b. Ahmad. But after Nasr b. Ahmad's death, the Ismaili mission was persecuted and al-Nasafî perished in the catastrophe (331/942 or 332/943). His Kitâb al-Mahsûl was criticized by another Ismaili dignitary, Abû Hâtim al-Râzî, in his Kitâb al-Islâh. Abû Ya'qûb Sejestânî defended his master al-Nasafî in the Kitâb al-Nusra. We are aware of this controver¬sy thanks to the critical appraisal of it drawn up by the great theoretician and Fatimid dig¬nitary Hamid al-Dîn al-Kirmânî (d. 410/1019) in his Kitâb al-Riyâd (in which he often takes al-Râzî's side). Let us note, as others have, that Nasafî would have asserted that Adam provid¬ed not a shari'at, the rules of human behavior, but rather an esoteric knowledge (Vim). In this way, Adam would be the origin of the line of prophets, an origin which would become confused with the contribution of a purely spiritual religion. The end of the historical succession of prophets in the figure of the Resurrector, abolishing the positive religion of Mohammad, would correspond with this. These antinomian tendencies converge with those of those of the Qarmatians, and are certainly in keeping with the exasperated expectations of Mohammad b. Ismâ'îl's return. This is the same thinker — who seems to upset the balance of zâhir and bâtin for the sake of spiritual religion, and who thinks within the element of messianic wait¬ing — who is responsible for the neo-Platonic recasting of Ismaili theology. See Wladimir Ivanow, "An Early Controversy in Ismailism," Studies in Early Persian Ismailism (Bombay: Ismaili Society, 1955), 115 ff. (particularly 145¬147); S.M. Stern, "Abu Hatim al-Râzî on Per¬sian Religion," Studies in Early

Ismailism (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), 31 f., "The Early Ismâ'îlî Missionaries in North-West Persia and in Khurasân and Transoxiana," Studies, 219 f., and "Isma'îlîs and Qarmatians," Studies, 297; Wilferd Madelung, "Ismâ'iliyya", Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition, Book III, 212, and Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran (New York: Persian Heritage Foundation, 1988), 97 ff; Kitâb al-Riyâd, p. 176 ff.

2. Stern, Studies, 221.
3. See the list of his works in Wladimir Ivanow, A Guide to Ismaili Literature (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1933), 33-35.
4. S.M. Stern, art. "Abû Ya'kûb al-Sidjzî," Encyclopedia of Islam, second edition, Book I, 165.
5. Kashf al-Mahjûb, Persian text published with an introduction by H. Corbin, Tehran-Paris, 1949; Le Dévoilement des choses cachées, translated from the Persian and introduced by H. Corbin (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1988).
6. Kitâb al-Yanâbi', section 155 of Le Livre des sources, thirty-fourth source, in Henry Corbin, Trilogie ismaélienne (Paris: Adrien Maison-neuve, 1961), 103.
7. Kitâb al-Yanâbi', sections 147-148 of Livre des Sources, thirty-second source, in Corbin, Tri-logie, 100 f.
8. Dévoilement, 29 (Kashf, 2). Ibid. (Kashf, 3).
9. A.M. Goichon, Lexique de la langue philoso-phique d'Ibn Sînâ, 134. On the topic of the subtle play between al-dhât, essence, and al-jawhar, substance - as well as its conse-quences for Fârâbî, to whom Avicenna owes so much - see R. Arnaldez, "L'Âme et le Monde dans le système philosophique de Fârâbî," Studia Islamica XLIII, 59.
10. Corbin, Trilogie, 47.
11. See Dévoilement, 34 f. (Kashf, 4 f.). The concept by which we designate this fact that God absents himself from Being is that which names its originary spontaneity: it will be the Originator.
12. Ibid., 33 (Kashf, 4).
13. One would need to say corporality [corporalité], following an expression proposed by Guy Lardreau. Sensibility, which causes us to accede to bodily existents, thereby allows us to have a proper grasp of Being and the being. Sensibility unveils the general nature of the existent, thingness, to us: in order to be, one must be a face, a figure. This is true for bodies, but also for spiritual forms. Sensibility does not mislead us when it makes us interpret existence in terms of figurability or corporality. That which possesses neither figure nor limit does not exist - and we know the problem that the existence of the indeterminate bodily substance will pose for Descartes. For the concept of corporality, see G. Lardreau, "La philosophie de Porphyre et la question de 'Interpretation," in Porphyre, L'Antre des Nymphes dans l'Odyssée (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1989), 21.
14. Shahrastânî, Livre des religions et des sects, Tome I, trans. D. Gimaret and G. Monnot (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 1986), 555.
15. Al-Risâlat al jãmi'a, ed. M. Ghâleb, 24 f.
16. We find this important analysis of the indistinction of the One in the Yemeni dâ'î `Alî Muh. Ibn al-Walîd (d. 612/1215). See Tâj al-Aqâ'id, 26.
17. Ibid., 28, 30.
18. The question is controversial. The work of F. W. Zimmermann seems to show the uselessness of a Syriac transition.
19. See "The Origins of The So-Called Theology of Aristotle," in Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages (London: Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts XI, 1981), 110-240.
20. See S. Pinès, "La longue recension de la Théologie d'Aristote dans ses rapports avec la doctrine ismaélienne," Revue des Etudes Isla¬miques (1954), 8-20.
21. Dévoilement, 34 (Kashf, 4).
22. Nâsir-e Khosraw, Kitâb-e jãmi' al-Hikmatain (Le livre réunissant les deux sagesses), "Andar sharh-e yeki," 145 ff. of the Persian text (Tehran: Départment d'Iranologie de l'Institut Franco-Iranien / Paris: A. Maisonneuve, 1953). See also the "Etude préliminaire" by Henry Corbin, 114. Ibid., 145.
23. What this Platonic gesture entails is entirely elucidated by Alain Badiou in Being and Event, trans. Oliver Feltham (New York: Continuum, 2007). See also, by the same author, Number and Numbers, trans. Robin Mackay (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008). It seems to us that these two books, beyond the Cantorian cut that Badiou exalts, wish to meditate on the situation of the One in a transhistorical perspective. This meditation has the vocation of profoundly modifying reflection on Being as Being, and of authorizing a "step beyond" [pas au-delà] Heidegger. Our return to Ismaili liberty could, in the same manner, be read as the beginning of a discussion with the legacy of German ontology, and in particular with the dialogue originated by Heidegger with Schelling; a dialogue for which one must today, perhaps, substitute others — one that would be placed under the sign of a Cartesian gesture, and another that would radically challenge Heidegger's historicization of Platonism.
24. Nâsir-e Khosraw, Kitâb-e jãmi' al-Hikmatain, 145, I. 9.
25. Alexandre Koyré's theses are complex. On the one hand, the Galilean cut is radical. On the other hand, it is prepared by a discursive network wherein the neo-Platonism of the re-naissance

plays a major role. Touching upon the question of the infinite and its figuration in liberty, it seems to me that the cut of modern science, in order to be indisputably foundational, does not exclude other continuities, and that the history of Platonism is not that of an ancient ontology, or at least not exclusively ancient.

26. Nâsir-e Khosraw, Kitâb-e jâmi' al-Hikmatain, 12-18. This is the ninth hypothesis in Parmenides (165th). Subsequent references will appear parenthetically within the text.
27. Parmenides, 137c-142a.
28. Dévoilement, 35-45 (Kashf, 5-15).
29. Nâsir-e Khosraw, Zâd al-Musâfirîn, ed. M. Bazlurrahman (Berlin: Kaviani Press, 1922), 346.
30. Ibid., 344.
31. Corbin, Trilogie ismaélienne, 19, n19.
32. Proclus, The Platonic Theology, Vol. 1, Books 1-3, trans. Thomas Taylor (El Paso: Selene Books, 1985), 125; translation modified.
33. Kitâb al-Yanâbi', section 22 of Le livre des sources, fourth source, in Corbin, Trilogie, 34.
34. On this point, we connect the "approach of the impersonal" and the "figures of insignificance" proposed by P. Stanislas Breton in Rien ou quelque chose [Nothing or Something] (Paris: Flammarion, 1987). A confrontation between our authors, inspired by Plotinus but dedicated to rediscovering the auto-exceeding movement of neo-Platonism with Proclus and above all Damascius, would impose itself here. In this way, the concept of the contraction of the intelligible, and above all the thought of the One as dual in Damascius, have a direct relation with that which is being thought on the part of our Ismailians. See Damascius, Des premier principes, trans. M.C. Galpérine (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1988), 306-307 and the introduction by M.C. Galpérine, 33. What is at play is nothing less, as Guy Lardreau writes, than "this monster for trivial classifications: a negative philosophy as the thought of pure affirmation," in Annuaire philosophique 1987-1988, ed. François Wahl (Paris: Seuil, 37).
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[Shari'a Scripts: A Historical Anthropology](#) by Brinkley Messick [Columbia University Press, 9780231178747]

A case study in the textual architecture of the venerable legal and ethical tradition at the center of the Islamic experience, Shari'a Scripts is a work of historical anthropology focused on Yemen in the early twentieth century. There—while colonial regimes, late Ottoman reformers, and early nationalists wrought decisive changes to the legal status of the shari'a, significantly narrowing its sphere of relevance—the Zaydi school of jurisprudence, rooted in highland Yemen for a millennium, still held sway.

Brinkley Messick uses the richly varied writings of the Yemeni past to offer a uniquely comprehensive view of the shari'a as a localized and lived phenomenon. [Shari'a Scripts](#) reads a wide spectrum of sources in search of a new historical-anthropological perspective on Islamic textual relations. Messick analyzes the shari'a as a local system of texts, distinguishing between theoretical or doctrinal juridical texts (or the "library") and those produced by the shari'a courts and notarial writers (termed the "archive"). Attending to textual form, he closely examines representative books of madrasa instruction; formal opinion-giving by muftis and imams; the structure of court judgments; and the drafting of contracts. Messick's intensive readings of texts are supplemented by retrospective ethnography and oral history based on extensive field research. Further, the book ventures a major methodological contribution by confronting anthropology's longstanding reliance upon the observational and the colloquial. Presenting a new understanding of Islamic legal history, Shari'a Scripts is a groundbreaking examination of the interpretative range and historical insights offered by the anthropologist as reader.

[Shari'a Scripts](#) explores debates within an Islamic legal tradition about the status of writing and thus of recorded truth. This is an impressive piece of work that draws upon the author's four decades of thought and reading. No one else can move among these Yemeni texts with such assurance, and classic works such as Kitab al-azhar, Shar' al-azhar, and Sayl al-jarrar are read more closely than any Western academic has attempted previously. A formative and distinguished book. (Paul Dresch, St John's College, Oxford)

Multicentury approaches of the shari'a have regrettably transformed law into a banal history of ideas without much connection to practice. Messick's [Shari'a Scripts](#) instead takes the shari'a right from the economy of the local, that of central Yemen, and places research at a micro level. Historical

anthropology makes possible the tracing of genealogical lines of power relations, and the depiction of narratives and discourses in relation to local practices. This book, which takes the logic of texts and their practices to new heights, stands out as a masterful contribution to shari'a studies worldwide. (Zouhair Ghazzal, Loyola University, Chicago)

What would be an anthropology of an Islamic juridical tradition? Anthropology aims to describe the whole as lived. Hence the ambition is larger than the historical genealogies or analytical interpretation of textual scholarship. This book examines both the structure of the jurisprudential 'library,' using the techniques of textual scholarship, and the 'archive' of day-to-day documentation of life in law, situating documents in the practices of writing and orality. Such an undertaking is virtually unique: the late survival of scriptural practice, the living interface of Zaydi and Shafi'i traditions, and the political centrality of Islamic jurisprudence made never-colonized highland Yemen of the mid-twentieth century a unique site for such an anthropology. The result is a mature work that quietly destroys clichés ever reproduced not only by journalism (and political revivalist movements) but also by textual scholarship. There cannot be another like it. (Martha Mundy, London School of Economics)

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Excerpt:

[Shari'a Scripts: A Historical Anthropology](#) by Brinkley Messick examines the Islamic shari'a as a formation of local texts. In my early fieldwork, sketched above, such a conception was not in my mind, but a number of the research activities initiated then opened lines of inquiry that, brought together, eventually led to this study. Returning to Ibb over the years, I assembled a diverse corpus of written work that pertains to the town society and

its contingent of jurists and practitioners. Yemen, mountainous and agrarian, remains the setting and the Zaydi and Shāfi schools, rooted in the highlands for a thousand years, the juridical traditions.

Understood to be divine in origin and human in interpretation, the sharia comprises a character both transcendent and immanent, a reality at once timeless and historical.' Yet beyond the twin formal senses of the term—as a revealed law and as the humanly created jurisprudence of the fiqh—a colloquial term will serve to indicate the further range of the lived phenomenon to be addressed in this book. In a down-to-earth sense, dropping the definite article, "shari`a" refers to litigation, to conducting a lawsuit before a judge. "Me and you, sharia!" is an age-old challenge to an adversary to take a matter to court.

Although my research in and on Yemen has spanned the last several decades, the readings I carry out here center on a prior moment. This is the first half of the twentieth century (up to the republican Revolution of 1962), during which time the town of Ibb and its region of Lower Yemen were under Zaydi administration. I concentrate on this recent historical era rather than, more conventionally for an anthropologist, on the years of my research residence because of the significant opportunities that this earlier period affords. These are to study a set of sharia writings in a context apart from direct western colonial control, and thus at a remove from the decisive legal changes wrought by such regimes; in an interval just prior to the advent of the Yemeni nation-state, and thus before the onset of the equally transformative changes associated with such modern political orders; and, not least, in the final half-century of the classically styled, shari'a-based Islamic polity of the Zaydi imams.

Through a localized history of a civilization-wide tradition I engage the still elusive question of how the sharia functioned in specific settings. While limited in scale, my text-focused inquiry is comprehensive in perspective. In terms of genres, the assembled writings offer a representative inventory. With an emphasis on the Zaydi tradition and on the late period of imamic rule in the Ibb region, these sources are of four broad types: (1)

fiqh works of literary jurisprudence, notably The Book of Flowers and its major commentaries, plus selected works in collateral academic fields and several types of minor doctrinal writings; (2) free-standing formal opinions in two varieties, one (the fatwã) known to all historical Muslim societies, the other (the ikhtíyār, or "choice," of a ruling imam) specific to Yemen; (3) transcript-based case records issued by the sharia courts of Ibb town in the twentieth-century imamic period; and, from the same town and its hinterland in that period, (4) private notarial documents embodying acts such as land sales, sharecropping leases, and marriage contracts. The main law books became available in print editions in the early decades of the century, but the bulk of these writings, including the court records, are handwritten and were obtained from private individuals. In the range of genres, their collective association with a particular time and place, and their ethnographic sourcing, this corpus of writings offers an unprecedented set of objects for a situated study of the historical sharī`a as a textual tradition.

I read these variegated Arabic texts as a historical anthropologist. My general premise is that a given sharia system may be instructively approached through an analysis of its written acts, from the literary to the documentary. To inquire into what kind of writings these are is also to ask what kind of law this was. In more specific terms, I suggest that a grasp of textual relations in the sharīra is a prerequisite for understanding both how it operated in concrete situations and how it moved over time. "Genre" in this book refers not only to elements of form and types of texts—the familiar senses of the term—but also to institutions of human thought and action.' To the extent that the sharia may be conceived of as "saying" or "doing" things, it spoke and acted in specific genres. Texts of the various types provided the differently patterned vehicles for linking fact and rule while at the same time serving to define the principal judicial roles.

Considering writing to be a social fact with its own significance, I treat written texts, from the law book to the common contract, not simply as the means for an inquiry—that is, as conventional sources—but also as ends. Reversing the normal order of the

source, I address writings to learn about their production and reception. I distinguish between acts and artifacts, between the fleeting historical events of writing and their persisting material objects. I read the latter, the extant artifacts, for evidence of the earlier acts of writing. The general strategy of this book (and its basic conceit) is to isolate this textual dimension for separate study and to then sustain an analysis of what Hayden White refers to as "the content of the form. "This is a conception according to which form "already possesses a content prior to any given actualization of it in speech or writing."

In addition to what can be learned in this way about the overall shape and the detailed working of the sharia, I maintain that close attention to textual form ought to be a precondition for wider research, for properly assessing the import of the various sorts of source materials—doctrinal passages, formal opinions, litigation transcripts, contracts, etc.—for the writing of history. Here, I venture into the rich substantive concerns of such writings only insofar as the topical emphasis is on textual matters. Together with limiting the scope of the inquiry to a specific spatial-temporal instance, this determined focus on textual form describes the circumscribed history I have attempted in these pages.

My analysis of the diverse textual deployments of sharī'a-based knowledge tracks relations of power rather than a pursuit of hollow or neutral formal abstractions. Connecting genres of texts with forms of authority, I understand writing, reading, and interpreting as specific moments in such relations. In the historical period in question, a key part of the authoritative character of textual events derived from the interpretive presence of a ruling imam. Such texts, in short, are "facts of power."'

Rather than an ideal or generalized Muslim, my concern in this book is with the particular people of this local textual order—that is, with the individuals who taught, studied, wrote, copied, memorized, commented on, and interpreted works of fiqh, some of whom from time to time issued formal opinions or delivered court judgments and others of whom drafted the various types of routine instruments. This also includes the individuals who retained

caches of such documents in their homes or who were merely among the documented, the countless persons whose names—or those of their relatives or ancestors, not to mention their adversaries— figured in these locally placed writings as questioners and petitioners, litigants and witnesses, owners and agents, landlords and sharecroppers, heirs and beneficiaries, spouses and children.

In my ethnographic research, which commenced a decade and a half after the demise of the old imamic polity and which has continued, intermittently, into the present century, I read with jurists, practitioners, and nonspecialists and I observed diverse scenes of writing. My fellow readers assisted me in explicating issues of doctrine and custom, understanding genre constraints, and identifying local written usages. They also exposed me to techniques of textual implementation and analysis, including how a compound undertaking or a complex dispute could be broken down into a series of written acts, or how a single text could be dismantled into its component clauses. Closely related was my research on instances of writing and reading in the varied contexts of text production. In connection with disputes and settlements I focused on transitions from spoken words and quotidian realities to written documents and juristic expression. I examined written documents in situ and archives at their points of creation. In this manner, I began to learn what to read for and how one did things with these sorts of written texts. I draw here on these ethnographic experiences in participatory reading and in observation of the drafting, use, and preservation of texts for the purposes of historical reconstruction.

I also take cues from the textual imaginations of the historical jurists. These highly reflective scholars thought deeply about textual matters, from the constitution of authoritative knowledge in written books to the status of ordinary written instruments as evidence in court, and they did so over many centuries. I am interested here in their views as to how the textual universe behind the interpretive act was configured as well as in the model texts and the instructions they created for the preparation of routine records and documents. A distinct thread of their thought was motivated by the perceived evidentiary dilemmas of ordinary sharia writings

such as contracts. Concerns about forgery, error, ambiguity, uncertainty, and so on were part of broader debates focused on a long-standing juridical problem, that of basing action on writing or, simply, "practice with writing" (al-ramal bi-l-khatt). It may be remarked that in one respect the textual approaches of these jurists parallel mine in this book. For certain of their own analyses they, too, separated form—that is, writing itself—from any particular content. Regarding their worries about such matters as the falsification of written evidence, the court transcripts of the period, with their accusations, contestations, and findings, demonstrate that these were not unfounded.

This thread of the jurists' thought figures as a topical theme in the following chapters, in a two-sided approach that is characteristic of this study. On the one hand, I follow this doctrinal thinking across its formal instantiations in multiple written formats of the period, including books, freestanding opinions, and model texts. On the other hand, I offer parallel coverage of the indicated types of local documents, again across a detailed roster of written genres, including items prepared by the period courts and by private notarial writers. Taken together, these conceptual and applied perspectives on written practice permit a dialectical understanding of the textual relations in play. In this way, via readings that commence within specific genres but then traverse, and ultimately comprise, the entire corpus, I elucidate the statuses and the roles of the differing categories of writings in what may be thought of as a textual formation. <>

God and Man in Tehran: Contending Visions of the Divine from the Qajars to the Islamic Republic by Hossein Kamaly [Columbia University Press, 9780231176828]

In God and Man in Tehran, Hossein Kamaly explores the historical processes that have made and unmade contending visions of God in Iran's capital throughout the past two hundred years. Kamaly examines how ideas of God have been mobilized, contested, and transformed, emphasizing how notions of the divine have given shape to and in turn have been shaped by

divergent conceptualizations of nature, reason, law, morality, and authority.

God and Man in Tehran analyzes official government policies, modern textbooks, and university curricula; popular beliefs and ritual practices; and philosophical and juridical attitudes toward theological questions in traditional institutions. Kamaly considers continuity and change in religiosity under the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties; the significance of outbreaks of messianic expectations; why a modernizing nation took a sudden turn toward state religiosity; and how the Islamic Republic deploys visions of God against foreign enemies and domestic critics. Beyond the majority Shia Muslim population, the book includes minority and suppressed voices. With a focus on the diversity of ideas of the divine, God and Man in Tehran offers a novel perspective on the intellectual movements that have shaped Iranian modernity.

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Excerpt: God, a word everyone knows, but one that carries different meanings for different people. For believers, it defines the ultimate concern. Nonbelievers, skeptics, agnostics, atheists, and others also employ the word, sometimes far less reverently, in exclamations of surprise or cries of despair. Sometimes this term refers to the object of faith, the fount of values, or even the very ground of being. The present book surveys the terrain of the discourse on God as it has emerged and continues to evolve in Tehran, the capital of Iran, from the 1800s until now.

For generations, God-related ideas and practices have intersected in expressions of shared faiths, forms of worship, charity, and service, bringing disparate peoples eye to eye and side by side. At the same time, conflicting perceptions of God and religion have split the people across fissures of creed, belief, class, gender, and other presumed hierarchies. Exploring these ideas provides a fresh perspective on social and intellectual history.

Iran's 1979 revolution rendered trite any proclamations that you cannot understand that country, and in fact the region, if you do not take religion into account. Four decades later the challenging question lingers: How and why did a rapidly Westernizing, outwardly secular nation take such a sudden reversal in the name of Islam? Many observers have commented on the roots and results of that seemingly unlikely, even unthinkable, turn from the king's crown to the Imam's turban, an untimely act of claiming the mantle of divine authority in the modern age. Alarmed by the rise of various forms of religious-political activism around the world in recent decades, some have come to see Iran's Islamic Revolution as the usher of a new global age of theological politics and advancing worldly agendas in the name of God. Without commenting on the current international situation or pretending to address practical political concerns about Iran, this book adopts a rather different perspective, focusing on intellectual ferment in one Iranian city:

Tehran

Tehran is one of the most densely populated metropolitan centers in the world today, sleeping over eight million souls each night. The city proper stretches seventeen miles north to south and sixteen miles east to west. During work hours, hundreds of thousands of people commute to the heart of this urban colossus. Students, nurses, vendors, and laborers shuttle back and forth from the edge cities of Karaj, Varamin, and Shahr-e-Rey, or the more distant satellite towns of Malard, Meygun, and Robat-Karim. Tens of thousands more people travel a few times per week the hundred miles to Tehran from Arak, Qazvin, and Qom. As the capital of an internationally visible nation-state with enormous economic prospects and a rich cultural currency, the

capital of Iran draws visitors from all over the world.

Compared with neighboring Turkey's Istanbul or Egypt's Cairo, Iran's capital bloomed late. The thirteenth-century geographer Yāqūt mentions Tihrãn as a nondescript hamlet near the ruins of the once-glorious ancient city of Ray or Raga.' No major urban development was yet in sight when Āgā-Mohammad Khan (d. 1797), a warlord from the Turkic Qajar clan, encamped there in the 1780s. Beckoned by tribal confederates, the Turkic Afshar and Qiliç clans in nearby territories, the Qajar chieftain crowned himself in Tehran, had coins minted, and proclaimed his divinely ordained authority by drawing on the Shia expectations of messianic deliverance. Vast pasturelands and abundant water sources of the southern piedmont of the Alborz mountain range, lying in the shadow of the perennially snowcapped Mount Damavand, added to the place's appeal. Seven Qajar monarchs reigned there for more than a century: Aga-Mohammad Khan (r. 1789-1797), Fat'h-`Alī Shah (r. 1797-1834), Mohammad Shah (r, 18341848), Nāser-al-Din Shah (r. 1848-1896), Mozaffar-al-Din Shah (r. 1896-1907), Mohammad-'Alī Shah (r. 1907-1911), and Ahmad Shah (r. 1911-1925).

Many of the issues related to the theme of this book still carry the marks of the not-so-distant past when Tehran served as capital of the Qajar dynasty, with the king and his court as well as the men of religious learning, the `olamā, at the center, along with throngs of merchants, artisans, and peasants on the periphery. The Pahlavi dynasty that abrogated Qajar rule in 1925 patterned itself as its opposite. While keeping the capital in Tehran, Rezā Shah (r. 1925-1941) and his son Mohammad-Rezā Shah (r. 1941-1979) dedicated their efforts to rapidly modernizing the city— revamping the legal, educational, health, and banking systems; constructing new roads, railways, and airways; building factories; and promoting a panoply of service industries—from chain stores to cinemas and nightclubs. Toppling the royal throne in 1979, the leader of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Rūhullāh Khomeini (ca. 1900-1989),

resolved to establish the rule of God on earth, negating and denigrating at every step what he called the ungodly (tāgūti) ways of the Pahlavis. In retrospect, continuities have been no less significant than changes. The Islamic Republic has revived, rehabilitated, or reinvented many Qajar-era traditions, customs, and values that hinged on the prominence of the `olamā. Meanwhile, the process of nation-state building reached its apogee—politically as well as ideologically—not merely as an upshot of revolutionary mass mobilization but even more effectively in the light of intensified national solidarity galvanized by the long Iran-Iraq War (1980-1989). After the bittersweet ending of that war, waves of economic, fiscal, political, social, and cultural revisionism have followed, bringing about a new world. As fragile and unstructured as it may still be, Tehrani civil society has grown and is becoming freer from the fetters of state control. At the core of these developments, there are deep-rooted notions about God, man, nature, and history. This book traces some of those roots.

I cannot overstress the point that the explorations presented in this book are historical, not theological, metaphysical, or religious, in both purview and purpose. The objective is neither to prove any theological propositions nor to disprove any metaphysical principles; neither to discover and expose the existence or nonexistence of primary truths or immutable essences nor to justify the dogmatic origins of concepts or delineate their consequences. Here is a disclaimer: Neither a polemic nor an apology, this inquiry does not settle age-old philosophical, theological, or religious scores. Rather, my goal here is to illustrate how certain ideas have been made, unmade, and remade within the geographic and historical confines of the city of Tehran.

Navigating through a sea of entrenched traditions, disciplines, and genres, distilling into words some major tides of thought and practice, this book focuses on the variety of views on God and man in Tehran. This is a case of historically contested concepts. The framework builds on a variation of earlier analyses of "essentially contested concepts," but without affirming or denying whether the concepts under discussion truly possess essences. In

the pages that follow, several positions will be framed successively in seven chapters. These views are interrelated in different ways, sometimes imbricating and convergent, sometimes discordant and diffusive, but always mirroring the concrete conditions that engender and sustain them. What Tehran is have believed or disbelieved reflects the ideals, anxieties, ambiguities, and ironies built or transpierced into their history.

Chapter 1 surveys the impact of modern natural science on related conceptions of reason, law, religion, and art. Introducing the term "mediatory theology" as a comparative rubric, chapter 2 discusses the historical unfolding of pertinent debates on the agentive relationship between God and the world. Besides the dominant majority Shia Muslim population of the city, the views of other faith groups inform this presentation—the thousands of Armenian and Assyrian Christians, Jews, Sunni Muslims, Zoroastrians, Bahais, and the Ahl-e Haq (People of the Truth). Chapter 3 continues with enumerating some God-oriented beliefs and practices that shaped the quotidian routines of ordinary women and men in Tehran. Of course, the intellectual elite often opined that the common folks' understandings of the real issues involved were inadequate, quaint, or outright incoherent. The following four chapters outline some aspects of more theoretically systematic disciplines that define the turfs of the expert elite. First comes an elaboration on perceived relations between the law of God and man-made legislation in chapter 4. As early as the 1810s, Tehran began to have religious madrasehs—educational institutions for the 'olamã. While law and jurisprudence formed the core of the curriculum in madrasehs, there was also room for metaphysical knowledge, or madraseh philosophy. This is the topic of chapter 5. Then chapter 6 follows with an overview of the development of some mystical ideas associated with Sufism. Finally, chapter 7 turns to religious skepticism and some other more recent theological developments. Ever since Tehran first rose to prominence, people of diverse walks of life embraced myriad beliefs about God. Where some stood unshakable in their convictions, others wavered in theirs. Looking at the expressions of theological skepticism, revisionism, and reformism,

the last chapter draws attention to the discursive negative space that surrounds the many views encountered in the preceding ones.

Relying on a wide array of sources, including many previously ignored or marginalized texts, this book aims to situate the historically contested idea of God directly amid key developments in Iranian history over the past two centuries. The chapters interweave narratives of the events, the contents of documents, the profiles of individuals, and activities of institutions that together shaped the lives of Tehranis. This exploration of God and man in Tehran, from the Qajars to the Islamic Republic, takes account of these elements together. However, it should be emphasized, at the risk of repetition, that the present inquiry focuses principally on Tehran, resisting the temptation to extrapolate to other cities, and avoiding the claim to be an intellectual history of modern Iran by any stretch.

Wherever possible, I will refer to material available in English and to recent scholarship. On a handful of occasions, writings in other European languages are cited for clarification. Referencing sources in Persian and Arabic was inevitable, mainly because most of the primary sources drawn on remain untranslated and because secondary research in those languages ought to be acknowledged properly and explicitly.

It goes without saying that this relatively short book could not be exhaustive. It leaves out a great number of events, individuals, and works. And since the sources do not always allow us to answer questions they were not written to answer, this should not be surprising. There is a great deal that remains to be explored. At best, this book can serve as an introduction to the making, unmaking, and remaking of historically contested views on God in Tehran, observing how some humans have treated each other and made a mark on the world, all in the name of God. <>

Anthropomorphism in Islam: The Challenge of Traditionalism (700-1350) by Livnat Holtzman [Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture, Edinburgh University Press, 9780748689569]

More than any other issue in Islamic theology, anthropomorphism (tashbih) stood at the heart of many theological debates, and was mostly discussed within the circles of traditionalist Islam. The way a scholar interpreted the anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Qur'an or the Hadith (for instance, God's hand, God's laughter or God's sitting on the heavenly throne) often reflected his political and social stature, as well as his theological affinity. This book presents an in-depth literary analysis of the textual and non-textual elements of ahadith al-sifat - the traditions that depict God and His attributes in an anthropomorphic language. It goes on to discuss the inner controversies in the prominent traditionalistic learning centres of the Islamic world regarding the way to understand and interpret these anthropomorphic traditions. Through a close, contextualized, and interdisciplinary reading in Hadith compilations, theological treatises, and historical sources, this book offers an evaluation and understanding of the traditionalistic endeavours to define anthropomorphism in the most crucial and indeed most formative period of Islamic thought.

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Preface and Acknowledgements
Introduction

Excerpt: The purpose of this study is to identify, characterise and contextualise the different approaches towards anthropomorphism (tashbīh, the literal meaning of the word is to make similar, compare, liken) in Islamic traditionalism. The period under review is from the eighth to the fourteenth centuries. The traditionalistic approaches towards tashbīh were crystallised during centuries of vehement debates about aᵃādīth al-‚ifāt, the traditions that depict God and His attributes in anthropomorphic language. These debates were an intrinsic part of the discussions on the divine attributes and God's spatiality. As versatile scholars who mastered the entire spectrum of literary genres, the Arab polymaths documented these debates in a variety of literary works. This documentation was neither systematic nor comprehensive. Naturally, we find references to these debates in the vast theological literature: kalām manuals, theological treatises, compendia of heresiography and simplistic traditionalistic creeds (ʿaqāʾid). However, other literary works also disclose the essence of the inner debates of the traditionalistic circles. Thus, we find fragments of information about these debates in the historical sources, mainly chronicles, and the professional literature for Hadith scholars, such as biographical dictionaries, Hadith manuals, exegeses (shurūᵃ) of prominent Hadith compilations, and exegeses (tafāsīr) of the Quran.

When I started planning the research for this book, I assumed that I would focus on the theological writings of the leading Islamic thinkers. Ibn Qutayba, Abu Yaʿla, Ibn al-Jawzi, and naturally Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, were the names that immediately came into my mind. However, in my reading of these scholars' works of theology, I found myself drawn more and more to other literary genres, mostly Hadith compilations and Hadith manuals. As a result, the task of conducting the research for this study was less tranquil than I had initially imagined and planned. First, the amount of literature relevant for this study turned out to be overwhelming. I found that almost every respectable thinker, whether Hanbalite, Ash'arite or otherwise, possessed an unrestrainable need to write a treatise about the divine attributes, the divine throne or God's spatiality, topics which are related to tashbīh. Furthermore, I soon realised that the true story of anthropomor¬phism in traditionalist Islam lies in the almost unexplored territory of ahādīth al-sifāt. The task of contextualising the different approaches towards tashbīh required me to temporarily leave my

'territorial waters', namely the hard-core theological literature. I was forced to set sail in 'high seas' into the heart of a conglomerate of texts of all kinds in search of pieces of evidence that contained the inner debates about anthropomorphism in Islamic traditionalism. The magnitude of this task entailed several decisions. The first decision was to concentrate on ahādīth al-sifāt and touch upon other related issues (such as the Ash'arite doctrine of the divine attributes) only briefly. The second decision was to pay attention to the ultra-traditionalists (the Hanbalites and their forerunners) and middle-of-the-road traditionalists (the Ash'arites and their forerunners). This decision necessarily entailed the exclusion of other groups that did not fall under the category of Islamic traditionalism such as the Kharijites, the Zahirites, the Kullabites and the Karramites. These groups, as well as the rationalistic groups (the Mu'tazilites, the Ibadites, the Shi'ites, and the Zaydites) are of course mentioned in the course of the discussion, but the focus is strictly on the traditionalists. The third decision acknowledged the need to avoid redundancy by excluding theological treatises that duplicated the arguments of previous texts that were already included in the book. The outcome of these three decisions influenced the focus of the book; this work does not encompass the entire range of relevant sources and topics. Instead, by focusing on ahādīth al-sifāt, the traditionalists who discussed them, and reading a selection of theological treatises, I was able to see the woods rather than the trees, and to explore new trajectories.

Ahmad ibn Salman ibn al-Hasan ibn Israʿil ibn Yunus, also known as Abu Bakr al-Najjad (d. 960, at the age of ninety five), was a muʿaddith (a professional Hadith transmitter) in tenth-century Baghdad. As a Hanbalite, Abu Bakr al-Najjad belonged to the most dominant group in this vibrant city. Led by the ambitious preacher al-Hasan ibn 'Ali al-Barbahari (d. 941), the Hanbalites of tenth-century Baghdad were characterised by their doctrinal enthusiasm and political activism. They enjoyed the unrestricted support of al-ʿāmma, the masses; this support enabled the Hanbalites to instigate riots against their opponents and dominate the public sphere.

The Hanbalite dominance of Baghdad notwithstanding, the city hosted scholars from the entire spectrum of Islamic thought. Thus, at one end of the spectrum of theological trends were the ultra-traditionalistic Hanbalites, who perceived themselves as the proponents of the genuine heritage of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers. At the other end of the spectrum were the rationalistic Mutazilites, the leading proponents of kalām, namely speculative theology. Between the rationalists and ultra-traditionalists, the middle-of-the-road traditionalists were situated. This group formed the majority of the traditionalists of Baghdad. The middle-of-the-road traditionalists were engaged with the study of Hadith, and some of them even expressed rationalistic views. As a political movement, the Mu'tazila lost its power in the middle of the ninth century; however, prominent Mu'tazilite thinkers thrived in Baghdad while their intellectual influence was wide and transcended the boundaries of the city. The Mu'tazilite thought attracted Shi'ites and Zaydites, and even influenced the development of Jewish systematic theology. Tenth-century Baghdad also witnessed the emergence of Ash'arism. The Ash'arites, a rising force in Baghdad, were traditional-rationalists: their thought combined reliance on the Hadith material (and from this respect, they were traditionalists) with the application of the principles of kalām. Last but not least, Baghdad hosted Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophers and intellectuals of different faiths (Christians, Jews and Buddhists).

However, as far as Abu Bakr al-Najjad and his fellow Hanbalites were concerned, Baghdad was the most important centre of Hadith transmission in the Islamic world, and a stronghold of Islamic traditionalism. Like many of his fellow muhaddithūn, al-Najjad followed the model of Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855), the eponymous founder of the Hanbalite school. Ibn Hanbal lived in abject poverty while generously sharing the scarce food he had with the poor and needy of Baghdad. This ethos of asceticism, called zuhd, united the Hanbalite scholars and the masses. Al-Najjad, as his fellow Hanbalite scholars recounted, was such a role model of piety. Once he joined a group of Hanbalites who paid a visit to one of the most

bashful muhaddithūn in Baghdad, Bishr ibn Musa (d. 901, at the age of ninety eight), to hear Hadith from him. Al-Najjad drew the attention of his fellow Hanbalites because he carried his sandals in his hand and walked barefoot in the streets of Baghdad. When his compatriots asked him why he did not wear his sandals, al-Najjad replied: 'I prefer to walk barefoot while I am in quest after the aphorisms of the Messenger of God.' A later Hanbalite scholar, who quoted this anecdote, remarked that perhaps al-Najjad followed a Prophetic hadīth in which the Prophet informed the believers that on the Day of Resurrection, God would look attentively and benevolently on the Muslim who walked barefoot while performing charitable deeds.

Al-Najjad was exceptionally popular among the students of Hadith in Baghdad: his Hadith classes were offered regularly every Friday at the mosque named after the caliph al-Mansur. In fact, he offered two kinds of classes: one class on Hanbalite jurisprudence (fiqh) that was held before the Friday Prayer, and one class that occurred after the prayer. The latter was dedicated to dictating (imlāʾ) the copious Hadith material that was at al-Najjad's disposal. This class was so crowded that the superintendents of the mosque were forced to close the doors that led to the court in which al-Najjad taught, to prevent more fervent students from entering.

Abu Bakr al-Najjad's prestige as a muhaddith emanated from his stature as the last disciple of the illustrious Hadith compiler, Abu Dawud al-Sijistani (d. 889).5 The Hanbalites used to passionately claim that al-Najjad also heard Hadith from 'Abd Allah ibn Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 903), the son of Ahmad ibn Hanbal.6 'Abd Allah was responsible for compiling his father's oral teachings and Hadith material. He canonised Ahmad ibn Hanbal's teachings by creating the Musnad, the most important textual source for the Hanbalites. As far as the Hanbalites were concerned, al-Najjad's alleged proximity to 'Abd Allah was sufficient to establish al-Najjad's scholarly stature. Other scholars, however, were much less impressed by al-Najjad's scholarship. First, they did not mention 'Abd Allah as one of al-Najjad's teachers, which

means that they did not consider him one of 'Abd Allah's disciples. Secondly, al-Najjad's name was somewhat tainted by allegations of plagiarism. For instance, the Baghdadian Hadith scholar, Abu 'l-Hasan al-Daraqutni (d. 995), who participated in al-Najjad's classes, claimed that al-Najjad used the Hadith material of other scholars, and attributed this material, which he was not entitled to teach, to himself. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi (d. 1071), who cited al-Daraqutni's unflattering view of al-Najjad, tried to exonerate al-Najjad from this severe accusation: 'Al-Najjad became blind towards the end of his life – explained al-Khatib al-Baghdadi – so perhaps one of his students dictated in his name this material that al-Daraqutni mentioned'. These allegations aside, al-Najjad was generally considered a reliable muhaddith: sadūq, that is, truthful, is the epithet that the Hadith experts attached to his name.

Al-Najjad's expertise in Hadith, combined with his ultra-traditionalistic worldview and his modest lifestyle, made him a faithful representative of tenthcentury Baghdadian Hanbalism. His oral teachings and testimonies, which are scattered throughout the biographical dictionaries, are therefore important in reconstructing the views of the Hanbalites of Baghdad. An unusually lengthy passage preserved in the biographical dictionary of Hanbalite scholars written by the authoritative Hanbalite scholar Ibn Abi Ya'la (d. 1131), describes al-Najjad's intensive efforts to verify the authenticity of one particular hadīth. This brief hadīth, attributed to the tābiʿī (pl. tābiʿūn, lit. a successor, an epithet given to a disciple of the sahāba, the companions of the Prophet Muhammad) Mujahid ibn Jabr (d. between 718 and 722), reflected Mujahid's understanding of God's promise to Muhammad as uttered in the Quran. Mujahid normally transmitted exegetical Hadith material on the authority of the sahābi °Abd Allah ibn °Abbas (d. 687–8), who is generally considered to be the founder of the science of Quran exegesis. However, in the case of this brief hadith, Mujahid opined his own understanding of God's promise to Muhammad as uttered in the Quran. According to Q. 17:79, God promised Muhammad 'an honourable station' (maqāman

mahmūdan). Mujahid explained this phrase: '[God] will make [Muhammad] sit down with Him on His throne'.9 Previous scholarship that discussed this hadith focused on its authenticity and its connection to the hardships that the illustrious historian and Quran exegete, Abu Ja°far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923), suffered from the Hanbalites of Baghdad.10 Relying on the relevant primary sources, the following discussion on the hadith attributed to Mujahid adds to the previous research and highlights several points that the research neglected. Three of these points, namely the paraphrasing of the hadith attributed to Mujahid, the addition of embellishments to this hadith, and the performance of a bodily gesture that accompanied the recitation of this hadith, demonstrate the most important features of the present monograph.

When Abu Bakr al-Najjad completed his thorough investigations about this hadith, he issued a creed (`aqida pl. `aqā'id), a profession of faith which reflected the feelings of the Hanbalites on this matter:

> This is our profession of faith before God: We believe in the content of the ahādith that are attributed to the Messenger of God, but also to 'Abd Allah ibn °Abbas (d. 687–8), and the scholars who succeeded him. These ahādith were transmitted from one great scholar to another, from one generation to the next generation, until the times of our great teachers. We wrote these ahādith, and meticulously investigated their content. These ahādith interpret the meaning of the Quranic verse [Q. 17:79] 'your Lord may exalt you to an honourable station'. According to these ahādith, 'the honourable station' means that Muhammad will sit with His Lord on His throne. Whoever rejects this interpretation and refutes it, expresses the views of the Jahmiyya (the Mu°tazilites). One must avoid this person, turn away from him, and beware of him. Abu Bakr al-Khatib (d. 933) informed me that Abu Dawud al-Sijistani told him: 'Whoever rejects the hadith attributed to Mujahid is a Jahmite (Mu°tazilite)'.

Al-Najjad concluded that the belief in Muhammad's noble virtue (fadila) of sitting with God on the throne was one of the cornerstones of the Hanbalite creed. To illustrate the strength of this belief, al-Najjad explained that hypothetically, a man who declared that God would make Muhammad sit down with Him on the throne and thereafter took the oath on pain of triple divorce to strengthen his declaration, should have never feared that he needed to divorce his wife. If this man came to al-Najjad to seek his legal advice whether he should divorce his wife or not, the scholar would tell him:

> You declared the truth, your oath is valid, and your wife should remain safely in her position. Because this is our way, our religion, and our creed. This is the root of our conviction from which we emerged. We will adhere to this conviction until the day we die.

Written in the middle of the tenth century, al-Najjad's creed paraphrased the hadith on Mujahid's interpretation of 'an honourable station' and elevated it to the degree of an article of faith for the Hanbalites. By doing so, al-Najjad sealed the turbulent history of this hadith and silenced all the voices that spoke against this hadith or merely doubted its veracity. Al-Najjad's creed concluded the continuous controversy about this hadith with a smashing victory over the middle-of-the-road traditionalists. To correctly evaluate al-Najjad's creed, we need to examine the meaning of this hadith and its history.

The hadith on Mujahid's interpretation of 'an honourable station' was one of the conspicuous ahādith al-sifāt, the traditions on the divine attributes that included anthropomorphic descriptions of God. This hadith was controversial in spite of the fact that it did not describe God in any physical way or form. When read literally, this hadith implies that 'an honourable station' is an actual, physical place, and that God's sitting on the throne (with Muhammad next to Him) is accordingly an actual sitting of a physical body. This reading obviously led to tashbih, namely comparing God to His creation and anthropomorphising Him. Laymen who heard this hadith might have been led to visualise a majestic human figure on a throne, sitting next to a much smaller human figure. The implied

description of God in this hadith was unmistakably an anthropomorphic description. Alongside the circulation of this anthropomorphic hadith in ninth-century Baghdad, a 'sterilised' or 'mild' version of the hadith proliferated in growing numbers among the traditionalistic circles in Baghdad and elsewhere, and dominated the traditionalistic discourse. This version, devoid of any anthropomorphism, was attributed to several Hadith authorities: the sahāba Abu Hurayra (d. 678) and Ibn 'Abbas, and a group of tābi'ūn, among whom the name of Mujahid was also conspicuous. According to this mild version and its variants, Mujahid and the other persona explained 'an honourable station' as 'the intercession (shafā`a) of Muhammad on the Day of Resurrection', that is, it was not an actual place but the role that Muhammad played as an intercessor (shafī`) for the Muslims facing their trial in the Final Judgement. This version, therefore, could have led its readers and listeners to an abstract concept but also to a specific scene depicting Muhammad as an intercessor before God while presenting his arguments on behalf of the Muslims. This scene was devoid of the divine throne and God sitting on it, and did not require sophisticated explanations to expel any likening of God to His creation. Unsurprisingly, this mild and certainly more convenient version was attributed to reliable persona throughout its transmission process. The flawless chain of transmitters (isnād, pl. asānīd) attached to the mild version and its variants, and the fact that it was a 'massively transmitted hadīth' (hadīth mutawātir, a hadīth with multiple chains of transmission) facilitated the entry of this version into some of the more important (although not canonical) Hadith compilations. The anthropomorphic version, on the other hand, was problematic also because of its chain of transmitters. Thus, it was not labelled as an authentic and reliable text (sahīh). Accordingly, the anthropomorphic version found its way into marginal Hadith compilations. In one of these marginal compilations, the author, the Hanbalite muhaddith Abu Bakr al-Ajurri (d. 971), decided to reconcile the anthropomorphic and the mild versions. In his Kitāb al-Sharī`a, a book highly

venerated by the Hanbalites, al-Ajurri dedicated an entire chapter to 'an honourable station'. In the brief introduction to this chapter, al-Ajurri explained that the 'honourable station' that God granted His Prophet would be both his role as an intercessor for all of God's creatures and the noble virtue (fadīla) attributed to him of sitting on the throne. Before quoting the anthropomorphic version, al-Ajurri quoted the ruling of the luminaries of Hanbalism according to which the hadīth attributed to Mujahid (the anthropomorphic one) should be accepted in the Islamic canon instead of being refuted.

From Abu Bakr al-Ajurri's statement, this particular anthropomorphic hadith served as a hallmark of Hanbalism, but still struggled for its place in the traditionalistic discourse. We suggest that this hadith achieved this dual stature even before the second half of the tenth century, when Abu Bakr al-Najjad started his investigations in order to establish the authenticity of the anthropomorphic version. This struggle apparently accompanied this hadith from its inception. Prior to the emergence of the Hanbalites as a distinct group in the Baghdadian public sphere, this hadith was the demarcation line between middle-of-the-road traditionalism and extreme traditionalism: the ultra-traditionalists (later to be identified with Hanbalism) who embraced this hadith, believed that Muhammad's sitting on the throne next to God was one of his many noble virtues (fadila, pl. fadā'il). The traditionalists who rejected this hadith claimed that it promoted a dualist worldview (thanawiyya), as Muhammad's depiction in it led to the understanding that he would assume a ruling position next to God, and even as God's equal. The ultra-traditionalists declared that their fellow traditionalists were infidels for not having accepted the veracity of this hadith. Thus, for example, the Baghdadian muhaddith Yahya Abu Bakr (d. 889 at the age of ninety-five) taught this hadith to his disciples and added: 'Whoever rejects this hadith, resists God. Whoever denies the noble virtue of the Prophet, is an infidel.' The rationalists (the Mu'tazilites), by the way, did not show any interest at all in this controversy, because they rejected almost the entire corpus (mukhālafat al-sunna) of

ahādith al-sifāt, namely the traditions which depicted God in an anthropomorphic language. The debate about the anthropomorphic version of the hadith attributed to Mujahid was therefore an entirely internal matter of the traditionalists.

The ninth-century ultra-traditionalists who defended this hadith and studied it, toiled a great deal to prove the antiquity of the text. Thus, a marginal muhaddith by the name of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Daqiqi (d. 876) declared: 'I heard this hadith for the last fifty years, and I never heard anyone rejecting it. Only the heretics and the Jahmites deny its veracity.' The traditionalists also decorated the hadith with further details during their study sessions. The Hanbalite Abu 'l-Hasan ibn al-'Attar (d. 881) reminisced about such a study session, conducted by the muhaddith Muhammad ibn Mus'ab al-'Abid al-Da''a° (d. 843) from Baghdad:

> Once I heard Muhammad ibn Mus°ab al-°Abid recount this hadith which is attributed to Mujahid, namely '[God] will make [Muhammad] sit down with Him on His throne'. After transmitting this hadith, Muhammad ibn Mus°ab al-°Abid added: 'So all the creatures will see Muhammad's posi¬tion at His Lord, and the respect that His Lord has for him. Thereafter, Muhammad will retire to his chambers, gardens and wives in Paradise, so God will remain alone in His ruling of the world.'

The Hanbalites had a taste for ahādith embellished with pictorial scenes. This is why they warmly embraced Muhammad ibn Mus°ab's freestyle explanations and additions to the anthropomorphic version. Repeated by his disciples, Muhammad ibn Mus°ab's embellishments were admitted into the Hanbalite canon, but rejected by the overall traditionalist canon.

Alongside their vigorous efforts to promote this hadith attributed to Mujahid, who was merely a tābiʿi, the Hanbalites searched for additional ancient versions of this text. Thus, they found evidence that a similar version circulated in the eighth century. This version was considered more

valuable than the hadith attributed to Mujahid, because it was attributed to the sahābi °Abd Allah ibn Salam Abu 'l-Harith al-Israʾili (d. 663–4). This sahābi was a Medinese Jew who converted to Islam two years before the Prophet died, and became an overflowing source of Judaeo-Christian traditions. 'Abd Allah ibn Salam became one of the Prophet's closest friends and the first Muslim who was promised Paradise in his lifetime. In the second half of the eighth century, °Abd Allah ibn Salam's name was connected to a hadith which circulated in Basra and was quite similar to the anthropomorphic version attributed to Mujahid. According to this hadith, °Abd Allah ibn Salam said: 'On the Day of Resurrection, your Prophet will be summoned [to God], and will be asked to sit in front of God on his throne.' A prominent muhaddith from Basra, Abu Mas°ud Sa'id ibn Iyas al-Jurayri (d. 761–2), transmitted this hadith. One of Abu Mas'ud al-Jurayri's disciples asked: 'Oh Abu Mas°ud, does this mean that by being on the throne, the Prophet will be actually with God?' Abu Mas'ud was annoyed by this question, and replied: 'Woe unto you! This is the most precious hadith for me in the entire world.' The Hanbalites of Baghdad perceived this anecdote about al-Jurayri as a reinforcement of their position in the debate about Muhammad's sitting on the divine throne. More importantly, they regarded the hadīth attributed to 'Abd Allah ibn Salam as precious, because it established the antiquity of the concept of Muhammad's sitting on the divine throne. However, as mentioned earlier, the textual evidence that the Hanbalites presented about the authenticity of the anthropomorphic version made no impression on the majority of the traditionalists. They preferred the mild version which had no anthropomorphism in it. The Hanbalites, however, promoted the anthropomorphic version which they cherished in different channels to a degree that this text became an icon of Hanbalism.

There were other ahādīth, similar to the hadīth attributed to Mujahid that were considered texts of dubious origin. These texts were compiled by the Baghdadian muhaddith Abu 'l-Qasim 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn 'Ali al-Khayyat (d. 1052); however, his Hadith compilation about the divine attributes is no longer extant. One of the rare versions in al-Khayyat's

compilation (quoted by a later source) was attributed to 'Aᵒisha (d. 678), the beloved wife of Muhammad. According to this version of the hadīth, 'A'isha testified: 'I once asked the Messenger of God about the honourable station, and he replied: "My Lord promised me that I would sit on the throne."' Another interesting version is attributed to the sahābī 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar (d. 693). According to his avowal, Ibn 'Umar's interpretation of Q. 17:79 relied on the Prophet himself. Ibn 'Umar thus explained that the verse meant that God would make the Prophet sit with Him on the throne.

The great canoniser of Ahmad ibn Hanbal's teachings, Ahmad ibn Muhammad Abu Bakr al-Marwazi (or al-Marrudhi, d. 888), was responsible for the transformation of the anthropomorphic version of the hadīth on the 'honourable station' from a marginal hadīth to an iconic text. Al-Marwazi and his fellow Hanbalites were concerned by voices within the community of the muhaddithūn which expressed their serious doubts about the verac¬ity of the anthropomorphic version and forthrightly preferred the mild ver¬sion. Al-Marwazi and his colleagues were especially concerned by a certain muhaddith who issued a letter denouncing the anthropomorphic version. The name of this muhaddith was never clarified; the Hanbalite scholars merely referred to him as 'al-Tirmidhi', thus emphasising his Persian origin (al-Tirmidh is located in today's southern part of Uzbekistan). 'Al-Tirmidhi' made his views against the anthropomorphic version known to the entire community of Hanbalite muhaddithūn in response to their vigorous efforts to promote this hadīth. One of these Hanbalites, Yahya Abu Bakr (whom we mentioned earlier), received a letter from 'al-Tirmidhi' claiming that 'whoever transmits the hadīth attributed to Mujahid is a Jahmite (Mu'tazilite) and a dualist'. Yahya Abu Bakr immediately sent the letter to Abu Bakr al-Marwazi, the most senior disciple of Ahmad ibn Hanbal. The letter containing the shockingly heretical words of 'al-Tirmidhi' immediately brought to al-Marwazi's memory a conversation that he had had with Ahmad ibn Hanbal years before the incident. According to al-Marwazi's avowal, he asked Ahmad ibn Hanbal

what would happen to someone who rejected one of the anthropomorphic traditions (al-ahādīth fī 'l-sifāt). Ahmad ibn Hanbal's forthright reply was 'avoid him' (yujfā). We note that Ahmad ibn Hanbal did not address the hadīth attributed to Mujahid in this brief conversation, probably because this hadīth was not known to him.

The meaning of Ahmad ibn Hanbal's reply was not to ignore this person, but to excommunicate him. Brushing up this long-forgotten reply by Ahmad ibn Hanbal drove al-Marwazi to an immediate act: he composed a book dedicated entirely to Muhammad's special virtue of sitting on the divine throne. According to later sources, al-Marwazi's book, which unfortunately no longer exists, contained all the possible variants of the hadīth attributed to Mujahid as well as a list of the scholars who vouched for the veracity of all these variants.31 Parts of this book are preserved in Kitāb al-Sunna, authored by al-Marwazi's disciple Ahmad ibn Muhammad Abu Bakr al-Khallal (d. 923), himself an important Hanbalite theologian and jurisprudent. Judging from the available fragments of al-Marwazi's book, it contained dozens of declara-tions by Hanbalite muhaddithūn who were active in the second half of the ninth century, in defence of the anthropomorphic version. These declarations also condemned 'al-Tirmidhi', describing him as a brilliant man who produced words of heresy. The Hanbalite muhaddithūn forbade any association with 'al-Tirmidhi' and called for a ban of his Hadith classes. There is no doubt then, that 'al-Tirmidhi' was in fact one of the muhaddithūn and not a fully fledged Mu'tazilite. We will reserve the inquiry about 'al-Tirmidhi's' identity for another time.

Al-Marwazi promoted the anthropomorphic version attributed to Mujahid by another effective way: whenever he recited this hadīth, he used to stand up and then sit down. This gesture illustrated that Muhammad's sitting on the throne was an actual sitting. The Damascene Hadith scholar and historian Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi (d. 1348), who recounted this rare anecdote (we have not located it in any other source), remarked that al-Marwazi indeed exaggerated his demonstration of support of this

hadīth. Al-Marwazi's gesture was meant for the masses: the performance of gestures was the most powerful device that the muhaddithūn used to excite their audience. More powerful than any word, al-Marwazi's gesture conveyed the message of the anthropomorphic version effectively.

Abu Bakr al-Khallal, al-Marwazi's disciple, continued his master's activism and also strove to keep the anthropomorphic version present in the public sphere. In 904, Abu Bakr al-Khallal, who spent several years in Tarsus (in today's southern central Turkey), learned that the followers of 'al-Tirmidhi' (ashāb al-Tirmidhī) were expelled from Baghdad in circumstances that unfortunately we have no knowledge about. These followers settled in Tarsus and started publicising their views against the anthropomorphic version while denying Muhammad's virtue of sitting on the throne. Al-Khallal wrote to his fellow Hanbalites in Baghdad and asked them to issue a well-reasoned opinion about this hadīth. The leaders of the Hanbalites in Baghdad sent al-Khallal a lengthy essay, which is located in his Kitāb al-Sunna. According to his avowal, al-Khallal conducted several public readings of the text throughout his long stay in Tarsus. His audience, no doubt supporters of Hanbalism, received the text with sheer joy.

By the end of the ninth century, and certainly due to the activism of Abu Bakr al-Marwazi and Abu Bakr al-Khallal, the Hanbalites came to the point of declaring the anthropomorphic version as consensually accepted by the entire community of traditionalists. This declaration was wishful thinking, but as the dominant group in Baghdad they saw themselves entitled to coerce others to accept their opinion. We found that the Hanbalite muhaddith Muhammad ibn Ishaq Abu Bakr al-Saghani (d. 903) declared that the traditionalistic consensus worldwide accepted the veracity of the hadīth attributed to Mujahid. The Hanbalites were happy with al-Saghani's judgement, because he was known for his numerous travels and close connections with the leading scholars of the prominent centres of learning throughout the Muslim world. If al-Shaghani unequivocally declared that the hadīth was accepted worldwide, no doubt he knew what he was saying. Al-Saghani's judgement

of this hadith was therefore accepted by the Hanbalites and other ultra-traditionalists as the absolute truth. While the Hanbalites, whose unabashed traditionalism was uncompromising, embraced this hadith and defended it vehemently, other 'mild' traditionalists rejected it. Thus, Abu 'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari (d. 935–6), the eponymous founder of the Ash'arite school who served as a spokesman for middle-of-the-road traditionalism, mentioned the anthropomorphic version as a work of forgery.

The Hanbalite scholarship in defence of the anthropomorphic version included enthusiastic declarations supporting this hadith and crowning it as authentic and valuable. Some Hanbalites went further and declared that this hadith reflected the absolute truth, and should it be refuted, they would immediately divorce their wives.40 The more reserved Hanbalites searched for Ahmad ibn Hanbal's opinion on this hadith. We found evidence of his supposed opinion in Ibtāl al-Taʾwilāt, a thematic Hadith compilation authored by the Hanbalite theologian and qadi Abu Ya'la ibn al-Farraʾ (d. 1066; he was also the father of the biographer Ibn Abi Ya'la). Abu Ya'la dedicated a lengthy chapter in his book to the efforts of the Hanbalite muhaddithūn to validate the hadith attributed to Mujahid. Thus, the Hanbalites claimed that Ahmad ibn Hanbal himself ordered his disciples to transmit the anthropomorphic version attributed to Mujahid in the exact wording as it was received. The Hanbalites further claimed that Ahmad ibn Hanbal believed that the anthropomorphic version should have been attributed to Mujahid's teacher, the sahābi Ibn 'Abbas.41 These two claims do not correspond with the fact that the hadith attributed to Mujahid was not included in the Musnad of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the canonical Hadith compilation of the Hanbalites. Furthermore, Ahmad ibn Hanbal is not mentioned in the list of some thirty early Hanbalite scholars who professed their support for the anthropomorphic version attributed to Mujahid. These names were assembled by Abu Bakr al-Marwazi himself. It is reasonable to assume that if al-Marawzi thought that Ahmad ibn Hanbal had supported this hadith, or merely acknowledged its existence, he would

have mentioned Ahmad ibn Hanbal at the top of the list.

The debate about the anthropomorphic version did not remain a theoretical issue. The hadith became a major component in the political agenda of the Hanbalites. In the year 922 (this is an approximate chronology, as the historical sources do not provide specific details about the following occurrence), a group of Hanbalites attacked the illustrious historian and Quran exegete Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923) in Baghdad. Al-Tabari, as one of the sources claimed, refused to accept the anthropomorphic version attributed to Mujahid and had the audacity to reject this hadith in public.

In his great exegesis of the Quran, al-Tabari implanted subtle references to his rejection of the hadith attributed to Mujahid: he first established that 'the majority of the scholars' (akthar ahl al-`ilm) believed that the 'honourable station' was Muhammad's intercession for the people on the Day of Resurrection, by quoting a dozen ahādith to prove his point. In the next phase, al-Tabari remarked that 'others' (ākharūn) claimed that the 'honourable station' meant that God promised the Prophet that He would make the Prophet sit on the throne, next to God. Thereafter, al-Tabari quoted ten anthropomorphic variants of the hadith attributed to Mujahid. As a rule, al-Tabari did not hesitate throughout his work of exegesis to accept certain ahādith as authentic and reject others. Nonetheless, he was extremely cautious in the case of the hadith attributed to Mujahid: Al-Tabari declared that there is no way to refute the authenticity of the hadith attributed to Mujahid, neither by locating some textual evidence (khabar) nor by applying rational reasoning (nazar). This saying is far from the enthusiastic declarations of the Hanbalites support for this hadith's veracity. We note that the Hanbalites declared that the sceptics who did not accept this hadith were heretics. However, in the severe circumstances in which al-Tabari lived in Baghdad (he was forced to stay at home, while visitors were prevented from visiting him), al-Tabari seemed to have no other choice but to issue his lukewarm support of this hadith's authenticity.

In 929, strife arose between the Hanbalite supporters of Abu Bakr al-Marwazi and 'a group of commoners' (tāʾifa min 'l-`āmma) in Baghdad. This strife, which soon escalated into riots (fitna) was ignited because of an argument about Q. 17:79, and 'an honourable station'. Relying on earlier sources, the Damascene historian Ibn Kathir (d. 1373) reported on these riots in his monumental chronicle al-Bidāya wa'l-Nihāya. Ibn Kathir's report is quite odd, because in it the 'commoners' claimed that 'an honourable station' was 'the great intercession', while the Hanbalites held their traditional position about Muhammad's sitting on the throne. According to Ibn Kathir, the riots resulted in the deaths of an unspecified number of rioters. Ibn Kathir adds his opinion that according to Sahih al-Bukhāri, the canonical Hadith compilation, 'an honourable station' was indeed the great intercession. It seems that by determining that there was only one possible interpretation of 'an honourable station', and that this interpretation was not the one favoured by the Hanbalites, Ibn Kathir (who was considered an indirect disciple of the Hanbalite Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya) expressed his reservation about the behaviour of the tenth-century Hanbalites and their choice of texts to venerate. Other authors of the Mamluk period, like the Shafi'ite Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (d. 1449), who in fact was inclined towards Ash'arite theology, accepted the hadith attributed to Mujahid. Ibn Hajar even harshly condemned a later rationalistic scholar who refuted this hadith. The admission of the anthropomorphic version to the traditionalistic canon was therefore fully accomplished in the fifteenth century.

The case of the hadith attributed to Mujahid illustrates one of the major disputes in Islamic theology from the eighth to the fourteenth centuries: the problem of anthropomorphism (tashbih). More than any other issue in Islamic theology, anthropomorphism stood at the heart of many theological debates, and was mostly discussed within the circles of traditionalist Islam. The way a traditionalistic scholar interpreted the anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Quran, and even more so in the Hadith (for instance, God's hand, God's laughter or God's sitting on the heavenly throne), often reflected his political and

social stature, as well as his theological affinity. We need to clarify that the Arabic term tashbih is not equivalent to 'anthropomorphism'. In fact, the term tashbih is wider than merely attributing human traits (both physical and behavioural) to God. In addition, the discussions about tashbih included careful deliberations on spatiality, directionality (especially aboveness) and confinement. Any feature that implied God's resemblance to any created body (either animate or inanimate) was included in the discussions on tashbih, although we often see the use of the term tajsim, corporealism, inserted in the theological discussions. In the absence of an equivalent term for tashbih in English, and because 'anthropomorphism' is the term selected for tashbih in western scholarship, both tasbīh and 'anthropomorphism' are inter-changeably used in this book.

This book examines the corpus of ahādīth al-sifāt or āthār al-sifāt (literally, the traditions or reports about the divine attributes) and its role in shaping the traditionalistic definition of anthropomorphism. These traditions depict God in anthropomorphic and corporealistic language. Widely used by Hadith scholars, both terms refer to anthropomorphism in the widest sense of the word: these traditions describe God's place in the universe, His bodily organs, the dialogue that He conducts with humans and His actions. The descriptions of God in ahādīth al-sifāt which are articulated in a simple language are meant to transmit a specific image of God, which is sometimes surprisingly detailed. Ahādīth al-sifāt form a rich source of information about the development of anthropomorphic concepts, their transmission and their proliferation. However, only a limited amount of research has investigated ahādīth al-sifāt and conceptualised them. This book examines closely these literary texts from phenomenological, literary, linguistic and historical perspectives.

This book, as a whole, offers a close, contextualised and interdisciplinary reading of Hadith compilations, theological treatises and historical sources. In addition, this book offers an evaluation and understanding of the traditionalistic endeavours in defining anthropomorphism during

the most crucial and formative period of Islamic thought. The book is divided into two parts: the first part (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) presents an in-depth literary analysis of the textual and non-textual elements of ahādīth al-sifāt. The second part (Chapters 4 and 5) focuses on the internal controversies in the major traditionalistic learning centres of the Islamic world regarding the understanding and interpretation of these anthropomorphic traditions. In Chapter 1, we present the methodology of literary analysis that we applied throughout this book through a close reading of three proto-types of ahādīth al-sifāt. As the methodology of literary analysis has never been applied to ahādīth al-sifāt before, this chapter aims to present the insights that can be reached by applying this methodology. We detect the typical features of ahādīth al-sifāt and reveal hidden meanings in the texts while considering two styles of narration: mimesis and diegesis, or showing (performing) and telling (recounting). Chapter 2 offers a combined literary-historical approach to two versions of hadith al-ruʾya, that is, the hadith on the beatific vision. This chapter further considers the role of the narrator in shaping the narrative, identifies the geographical origin of this hadith, and considers its role in the events of the mihna, one of the major events in the history of Islamic traditionalism. Chapter 3 spotlights the gestures (ishāra, pl. ishārāt) performed by the muhaddithūn in the process of transmitting ahādīth al-sifāt. Gestures were a significant feature in the process of Hadith transmission in general. In the case of ahādīth al-sifāt, the use of gestures entailed doctrinal and theological implications, and was in itself a matter of dispute. Chapter 4 examines the challenges that ahādīth al-sifāt posed to the traditionalists, and the way these challenges were met through the implementation of the bi-lā kayfa formula. This formula either meant 'without asking further questions', 'without paraphrasing text' or 'without attributing physical characteristics' to God, depending on the scholar's level of traditionalism. The lion's share of Chapter 4 presents the problematic aspects of ahādīth al-sifāt in the traditionalistic discourse through the case study of what is undoubtedly the most extreme text in the

repertoire of ahādith al-sifāt, namely hadith haqw al-rahmān, 'the hadith about the loin of the Merciful'. Chapter 5 examines the ubiquitous presence of ahādith al-sifāt in the public sphere by focusing on four milestones in the theological debates on the anthropomorphic texts in the Hadith. The focus of this book is on Islamic traditionalism and ahādith al-sifāt: the ultratraditionalists (the Hanbalites and their forerunners) and middle-of-the-road traditionalists (the Ash'arites and their forerunners). Other groups that contributed to the debates on anthropomorphism are mentioned in the book only in the context of their debates with the traditionalists. These groups are the Mu'tazilites, the Ibadites, the Shi'ites, the Zaydites, the Kharijites, the Zahirites, the Kullabites and the Karramites. Even without dedicating separate sections in this book to these groups, there remained several topics that touch upon anthropomorphism and Islamic traditionalism which we were forced to exclude from the present discussion. Thus, we reduced our deliberations on the various theories of the divine attributes and hermeneutics, and referred only to the concepts which are intrinsic to ahādith al-sifāt. Likewise, the convoluted Mu'tazilite-Ash'arite controversy on the origins of language and the deliberations on the dichotomy of haqiqa (the actual meaning of a word) and majāz (metaphor) that prevailed in the Ash'arite and Taymiyyan discourse were reduced to the absolute necessary minimum. These topics, in addition to the nuanced approach of the Hanbalite scholars Abu Ya'la and Ibn al-Jawzi to aᵃādith al-,ifāt, remain for another opportunity. All the translations from the Arabic sources in this book are the product of this author, apart from a few texts where we duly refer to the translations we used. Throughout this book, we systematically used N. J. Dawood's translation of the Quran, The Koran with a Parallel Arabic Text, 1st edition 1956 (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), which is a personal favourite. <>

The Iranian Metaphysicals: Explorations in Science, Islam, and the Uncanny by Alireza Doostdar [Princeton University Press, 9780691163772]

What do the occult sciences, séances with the souls of the dead, and appeals to saintly powers have to do with rationality? Since the late nineteenth century, modernizing intellectuals, religious leaders, and statesmen in Iran have attempted to curtail many such practices as "superstitious," instead encouraging the development of rational religious sensibilities and dispositions. However, far from diminishing the diverse methods through which Iranians engage with the immaterial realm, these rationalizing processes have multiplied the possibilities for metaphysical experimentation.

The Iranian Metaphysicals examines these experiments and their transformations over the past century. Drawing on years of ethnographic and archival research, Alireza Doostdar shows that metaphysical experimentation lies at the center of some of the most influential intellectual and religious movements in modern Iran. These forms of exploration have not only produced a plurality of rational orientations toward metaphysical phenomena but have also fundamentally shaped what is understood as orthodox Shi'i Islam, including the forms of Islamic rationality at the heart of projects for building and sustaining an Islamic Republic.

Delving into frequently neglected aspects of Iranian spirituality, politics, and intellectual inquiry, The Iranian Metaphysicals challenges widely held assumptions about Islam, rationality, and the relationship between science and religion.

Rationalizing the Unseen
…Zeynab's exorcism was one of dozens I observed among participants in Cosmic Mysticism, an Iranian spiritual-therapeutic movement that was at the height of its popularity during my research. These Cosmic Mystics in turn represent only a portion of a much broader landscape of spiritual seeking, therapeutic experimentalism, and occult exploration. The chapters that follow chart this terrain in contemporary Iran. I examine encounters with occult specialists, séances with the souls of the dead, new forms of exorcism and healing, and appeals to marvelous mystical powers. For my interlocutors, a phenomenon like Zeynab's possession by jinn exceeded ordinary experience and expectation, and therefore warranted being

labeled "metaphysical" (mavara'i or meta-fiziki). Even so, there was widespread agreement that such phenomena were best approached by steering clear of superstitions (khorafat) and carefully deploying the powers of intellect (`aql) and science (`elm), with the latter including systematic observation and manipulation. My interlocutors saw their practices as resolutely rational (`aqlani). Yet the specters of superstition proved elusive, evading attempts to exorcise them from reasoned inquiries and sneaking back to haunt them at every turn.

Appeals to science and reason notwithstanding, the practices that I study in this book often provoked elite consternation. Religious leaders, intellectuals, journalists, and statesmen criticized engagements with the occult as irrational and downright dangerous. Those elites committed to the more conservative strains of Islamic Republican ideology condemned spiritual experiments like Cosmic Mysticism as so many "deviant" (monharef) incarnations of "pseudo-mysticism" (shebh-e `erfan) fomented by foreign enemies in order to corrupt Iranian society from within. Opposition intellectuals likewise criticized occult practices as superstitious, but they placed the blame at the foot of the Iranian state itself. For some of these elites, the proliferation of irrationality was a result of the state's failure to provide economic and social stability. With rational solutions out of reach, they argued, the desperate had no recourse but to turn to irrational means for assuaging their anxieties. Others saw spiritual experimentalism as a form of resistance, an escape from the state's inflexible imposition of Islamic norms. Still others accused state officials of deliberately propagating superstition as a way of ensuring their own continued domination. The latter position has even found support in English-language scholarship on contemporary Iranian politics.'

Their many differences aside, the elite detractors of occult experimentation shared a crucial assumption: that the metaphysical engagements they condemned were fundamentally unlike their own intellectual pursuits; that is, they supposedly lacked commitment to reasoned scientific inquiry and were therefore mired in superstition and unreason. This book argues the exact opposite. I

show that the metaphysical inquiries of occult experimentalists and spiritual explorers like the Cosmic Mystics are best understood in terms of attempts to rationalize the "unseen" (gheyb)—that is, to grasp phenomena like sorcery and jinn possession in reasoned, scientific, nonsuperstitious terms. Furthermore, the commitments to science and rationality that my interlocutors shared with their elite critics were not mere matters of formal similarity or mimicry. An overarching argument of this book is that metaphysical inquiries have constituted a fundamental aspect of modern Iranian thought since the late nineteenth century. Indeed, they have consistently pushed the boundaries of established norms in ways that have rendered such inquiries edgy and avant-garde. This heritage of inquiry and experimentation has been almost entirely ignored and its epistemic consequences overlooked. In brief, my contention is that we cannot understand contemporary religion in Iran, including its intellectualist and orthodox manifestations, without adequately attending to the metaphysical inquiries of occultists and spiritual explorers.

When I speak of the rationalization of the unseen, I refer primarily to three interrelated processes that have been under way since the late nineteenth century. The first of these is the effort to cleanse metaphysical knowledge of superstition. As I understand it, "superstition," and cognate terms like "nonsense" and "irrationality," are discursive constructs with no independent substance outside of attempts to identify, demarcate, and eradicate them. For groups like the Cosmic Mystics, combating superstition meant staying away from dangerous "prayer writers" (do`anevis) or rammals and sifting credible knowledge from hearsay. In the exorcism account above, for example, Mr. Sheyda claimed to be counteracting the nefarious work of a prayer writer who had sold a jinn to Zeynab that now took possession of her. In his seminars, he took pains to distinguish the true metaphysical knowledge of Cosmic Mysticism from wrongheaded ideas propagated by prayer writers and their ignorant clients.

The second aspect of rationalization with which I am concerned is the attempt to formulate scientific concepts, methods, and models for grasping

metaphysical phenomena. The Cosmic Mystics did so by developing an experimental practice of exorcism that they called "psymentology" or "defensive radiation; which was aimed at expunging "inorganic viruses" like jinn and the souls of the deceased. When an exorcist uttered phrases like "Defensive Four" or "Positive Two," she tapped into an elaborate body of knowledgepractice that was disseminated in Cosmic Mysticism seminars, published in books and articles, and even articulated in the form of scientific conference papers and patent applications.

The third rationalization process I analyze in this book has to do with systematizing and disciplining individual dealings with the metaphysical in the service of attaining pious virtues, achieving health, tranquillity, and joy, or grappling with the problems imagined to be plaguing Iranian society. In Cosmic Mysticism, such attempts amounted, on the one hand, to the development of alternative forms of therapeutic spirituality, which included the practice of exorcism. On the other hand, Mr. Sheyda and his colleagues considered their mission to consist in the dissemination of a totalizing worldview (binesh) with its attending prescriptions for everyday behavior that they claimed would eventually solve society's ills. As a sustained project for spiritual and moral reform, Cosmic Mysticism ran up against competing discourses that articulated their own reformist visions through engagements with the metaphysical realm, while deriding the teachings of the Cosmic Mystics as irrational or deviant.

In all three processes, the rationalization of the unseen unfolds with explicit reference to conceptions of reason, intellect, and science, while the substance of these notions is itself up for debate. Even so, rationalization is not merely an intellectual activity but a complex process tightly connected to the emergence and consolidation of the modern state. Superstition is a problem for law enforcement and public order. Science pertains to mass education and the production and policing of legitimate knowledge. And therapeutic and disciplinary reason is entangled with the instrumental logics of bureaucratic classification, evaluation, and decision making. In the past two decades, these reasons of state have found

expression in theorizations of "Shi`i rationality" (`aqlaniyyat-e shi`eh), a concept favored by state-allied intellectuals and religious leaders who are concerned with critiquing and elaborating the epistemic foundations of an Islamic civilizational alternative to the secular West. Under the rubric of Shi`i rationality, a wide swath of topics have come under critical scrutiny and turned into objects of state planning. These include intellectual disciplines (jurisprudence, theology, mysticism, political theory, social science, and so on), structures of governance (the doctrine of velayat-e faqih or "guardianship of the jurist" and its institutional trappings, including those pertaining to education, cultural planning, and policing), normative modes of pious attachment (such as passionate love for the household of the prophet Muhammad and zeal for martyrdom), and ritual behavior (worship, spiritual wayfaring, and mourning for the family of the Prophet).

In focusing on rationalization since the late nineteenth century, and especially under the Islamic Republic, I am not claiming that earlier approaches to the unseen were irrational or indifferent to reason. Muslim thinkers have been concerned with identifying and eradicating superstition for centuries. Theologians have formulated sophisticated theoretical positions toward the unseen for just as long. And premodern philosophers, scientists, occultists, and mystics of various stripes have attempted ambitious syntheses of knowledge to bring human understandings of material and immaterial reality into grand totalities. These efforts have moreover intertwined in complex ways with conceptions of political order, the legitimation of divine kingship, and practices of governance. Modern rationalization, that is, should be understood not as an altogether unprecedented process but rather as a distinctive modality both continuous and discontinuous with the past.' Its distinctiveness has to do with the particularities of the modern bureaucratic state, and with the defensive position in which the proponents of metaphysical inquiries found themselves from roughly the turn of the twentieth century onward. Their attempts to cleanse metaphysical knowledge of superstition and to bring it in-line with modern scientific discovery participated in a larger theater in which Iranians encountered Europeans on unequal

terms and resolved to catch up, although this meant adopting the latter's criteria for evaluating their own progress. Even the contemporary proponents of Shi`i rationality with their strident civilizational ambitions have been unable to completely break free of this legacy.

My interlocutors in this book could be thought of as model subjects of the modern state's rationalizing projects, even if their commitments to reason do not always match those of state institutions and their allied authority figures. All of the women and men whom I came to know over the course of my research had completed high school. Most had gone on to obtain university degrees. They included graduate students, engineers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, howzeh scholars, university professors, businessmen, artists, writers, journalists, and housewives. Reading was an activity in which they engaged as a matter of course, and they were as conversant with books and periodicals as with websites and other digital media (sometimes in English and Arabic as well as Persian). Concepts like "reason," "rationality," and "science" were fundamental in their articulations of their identities. When explaining their orientations toward metaphysical questions, they frequently deployed such concepts and made it plain that they considered it crucial to justify their thoughts, commitments, and activities in rational terms.

Theological reason looms large in the various facets of the rationalization of the unseen that I examine in this book. This is a predominantly Islamic reason that draws on a centuries-old Shi`i tradition of philosophical, theological, and jurisprudential inquiry. It grants a privileged place to the intellect (`aql), whose dominion, capacities, and limitations have been extensively debated and elaborated.' The tradition's rationality consists in its systematicity and coherence, as well as its self-conscious attempts to define the limits of respectable inquiry and to exclude "nonsense" or "superstition" (khorafeh). Since the late nineteenth century, its rationality has also consisted in attempts to formulate coherent positions toward newly emerging rival modes of intellection, primarily those of the modern empirical sciences, post-Enlightenment Western philosophy, and new religious and philosophical currents within Iran.

The rationalization of theology pertains to the full range of these endeavors, whether involving accommodation, absorption, rejection, or modification of the positions and approaches of various rivals. But its scope is not restricted to that of orthodox Shi`i Islam. The Cosmic Mystics with whom I opened this introduction have a complicated and ambivalent relationship to Islam, but their outlook is no less theological and their speculations no less rationalist. Their development as an occult-mystico-therapeutic movement is rooted in engagements with and borrowings from Islamic orthodoxy and myriad Iranian heterodox currents, as well as a decades-long history of experimentation with modern European and American esoteric and "metaphysical" traditions, from mesmerism, Spiritism, and Theosophy to New Age-inflected Eastern spirituality, Native American shamanism, and Scientology. The theological projects that characterize these movements are, like their orthodox Shi`i counterparts, centrally concerned with the repudiation of superstition and the elaboration of rational positions, the latter often rooted in some conception of empirical science.

Modern scientific reason also plays a significant role in this book. I focus on its power to adjudicate metaphysical truth, but this power cannot be separated from the broader esteem that Iranians accord the modern empirical disciplines. State officials appeal to science's prestige to justify national projects (the nuclear energy program being one of the more notable examples), experts resort to its authority to support or question government policies, young people compete over its mastery in hopes of securing better jobs and more prosperous futures, and countless others invest it with fantasies—of progress, power, precision, speed, longevity, and other desires.

The power that science wields is a historical achievement, the effect of decades—if not centuries—of human effort. Its history is not one of uniform progress but of convergences and divergences among many different kinds of practice over a long stretch of time and in the face of myriad forms of contestation. These practices have included small-scale acts of discourse— translation nand instruction, oral and textual

disputation, learned exchange and popular entertainment—but also large-scale biopolitical projects, such as hygiene, eugenics, psychiatry, pedagogy, and so on. They have been implicated in the rise of new classes of professionals— scientists, engineers, technicians, bureaucrats, and educators—and also the building of new institutions and the undermining of old ones. No less important, these practices have been deeply entangled with the state's powers of legislation, disciplining, and coercion.'

Just as the history of the rise of modern science cannot be reduced to a tale of unilinear progress, so the actors involved should not be caricatured as secular progressive modernists battling reactionary traditionists. For one thing, commitment to Islamic tradition has translated to a spectrum of attitudes to modern science, including enthusiastic adoption and appropriation. On the other hand, if many "traditionists" over the past century have embraced modern science, many of the Iranian proponents of science typically imagined as "secularists" have been committed to explicitly religious projects. Scientific rationality, that is, has become intertwined with more than one form of theological reason.

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, theological and scientific rationalities have converged in the formation of Iranian state policy.' The bureaucracy, meanwhile, has been elaborated in the service of state interests publicly justified in terms of Shi`i orthodoxy. Two of these interests are significant for the arguments of this book: the inculcation of pious virtues among the citizenry, which includes combating "deviant" spiritualities, and the verification of these virtues in the process of vetting candidates for state employment. In both cases, the disciplinary rationalities that guide individual and communal practices of ethical self-care run up against, or become entangled with, the governmental logics through which the state makes Islamic piety an object of knowledge, cultivation, and evaluation. The metaphysical realm plays a significant role here both as a resource for moral reformers (including those embedded within state institutions) who use stories of divine marvels to bolster specific modes of virtue, and as a refuge for ordinary pious aspirants attempting to come to

grips with the moral uncertainties of a society they deem to have fallen into hypocrisy and greed.

From Occult to Metaphysical

In speaking of the rationalization of practices that involve spiritual healing, sorcery, jinn possession, dream visions, saintly marvels, and so on, I have thus far used the concepts of "occult," "unseen," and "metaphysical" as though they were interchangeable. Slippages between these concepts do occur, both in ordinary conversation and in some texts. But they are the products of different histories and may be used to refer to very different constellations of phenomena. For this reason, I treat them as distinct concepts both to clarify my analytical arguments and to lay the groundwork for explaining a number of significant religious and intellectual shifts in contemporary Iran. In brief, the metaphysical in this book refers to a modern rationalized form of the unseen and the occult. Even though the unseen and the occult can both become objects of intellectual speculation and rational-ethical conduct, there is a specific sense in which the metaphysical takes on a rationalized character that is lacking in the other two concepts. Just what, then, do the useen and the occult signify, and what does it mean to rationalize them?

The "unseen" or gheyb (Arabic al-ghayb) is a Qur'anic term and a key concept in Islamic theology. As such, it is centrally implicated in the human relationship with the divine, as well as with prophecy, theodicy, and eschatology.

The unseen brings with it a set of normative associations and prescriptions for ethical attachment. Perhaps this is most clearly demonstrated in the Qur'anic valorization of those who have "trusting belief" (iman) in the unseen— that is, those who invest in a world beyond that which is immediately perceptible through the material senses: God and the hierarchy of angels who do his bidding, divine mechanisms of revelation and inspiration, the final judgment and eternal life in the hereafter.

With the term "occult; I primarily refer to those forms of knowledge and power that Iranians consider within the purview of the centuries-old tradition of `olum-e gharibeh, which has usually been translated as "occult sciences; Gharib has the

sense of "occult," which we associate with magic and sorcery, but it also means "strange; "alien," "uncanny; and "exotic." The Islamic occult sciences are sometimes also rendered as `olum-e khafiyyeh or "hidden sciences; which again returns us to the occult in its evocation of concealment and obscurity. The occult, therefore, usually brings to mind a specific tradition of esoteric sciences, even if Iranians sometimes use it in relation to practices that they associate only loosely with that tradition.

In contrast with the unseen and the occult, "metaphysical" is a concept that has come into popular use more recently and with less technical specificity. The Persian term I am invoking is mavara, which is a truncated form of the Arabic phrase ma wara' al-tabi`a. The latter means "that which lies beyond the natural" and is the technical philosophical equivalent of "metaphysics." In Aristotelian philosophy, including its Islamic branch, metaphysics treats a range of topics, the most important of which is the study of "being qua being.' But mavara as it is used by Iranians today has little to do with this concept, even though their inquiries into metaphysical phenomena do often lead them to metaphysical speculation in the philosophical sense. In their usage, mavara refers to what we typically understand by the word "supernatural" in English. When Iranians deploy the word, however, they are not necessarily positing a neat separation from the world of material nature (which we understand to be graspable through the methods of modern science) but may also refer to extraordinary, paranormal, or uncanny phenomena that are fully natural but lie beyond our ordinary knowledge and experience. It is this beyondness that I want to emphasize in the metaphysical, rather than excluding nature or materiality per se.

There is, furthermore, a historical connection between the rise of the concept of mavara and what Catherine Albanese has identified as "metaphysical" forms of religious experimentation in America; that is, those practices and ideas that privilege mental powers, intuition, imagination, clairvoyance, and magic, usually in close concert with commitments to reason and scientific empiricism." This connection is most directly captured in a linguistic equivalence in Persian vernacular between mavara and met afizik, such

that the latter can at once stand for the "immaterial" (or beyond the physical), the extraordinary and paranormal, as well as the forms of knowledge associated with imported European and American forms of "scientific" spirituality and alternative therapy. It is telling that although esoteric traditions like Spiritism and Theosophy entered Iran from Europe in the early twentieth century, metafizik in the sense I have described did not, as far as I know, become a commonly used term until much later in the twentieth century when translations of American New Age materials became widespread.

Mavara and metafizik can be further distinguished from the occult and the unseen to the extent that the former lack any necessary connection to Islamic ethics and theology. To refer to an entity or phenomenon as metaphysical is only to indicate its quality as uncanny and as lying beyond ordinary knowledge and power. As an example, Iranian film critics often discuss Hollywood fantasies or supernatural thrillers as imaginative renderings of phenomena pertaining to mavara but never to gheyb (or for that matter, the occult). Normative or ethical considerations (Islamic or otherwise) are not essential to the metaphysical as a category, although specific metaphysical encounters may become sites for the enactment and development of particular ethical sensibilities.

In sum, the category of the metaphysical as I am using it encompasses those phenomena that might be deemed occult or unseen. In invoking specific Islamic traditions, however (no matter how loosely), the occult and the unseen bring with them certain theological and ethical considerations about which the person using the term "metaphysical" need not be concerned. Practitioners of the occult sciences, and those who engage with them in one way or another, need to reckon with these considerations, even if they ultimately dismiss them. The metaphysical, on the other hand, allows people to think comparatively (even scientifically) about the nature of the uncanny, strange, and extraordinary without being bound to the terms of specific theological or ethical arguments. It also enables conceptualizations of the epistemic and ethical stakes of particular encounters without being restricted to the Islamic occult tradition. It is in these

senses that I say the metaphysical is rationalized: those who adopt the term usually consider it to be a more general category than either unseen or occult, therefore allowing for comparative statements of the sort that they expect from empirical science and philosophical speculation. Yet the metaphysical represents only one channel along which the unseen and the occult may be rationalized. Both the unseen and the occult are sometimes retained in modern rationalizations, especially where reflection on their ethical entailments or the Islamic theological tradition within which they are grounded is deemed significant.

Uncanny Reason

The rationalization processes that I describe in this book are never completely successful in bringing people's understandings of the metaphysical into straightforward conformity with their commitments to reason. Such processes often produce feelings of disorientation and discomfort that in turn become further prompts to rationalization along new pathways. My analysis of this dynamic draws on Katherine Withy's reading of the uncanny affect in the work of Sigmund Freud and the German psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch. Withy describes several situations in which feelings of uncanniness may emerge. Drawing on Jentsch, she argues that the first of these scenarios is characterized by an irresolvable uncertainty about how to categorize a certain phenomenon. Ghosts, for example, are ambiguously alive and dead, past and present, and this may be why they inspire dread. Such anomalous entities reveal to us that the categories by which we come to know things are not always adequate. The second situation is more pervasive and has to do with the fact that the very structure of familiarity that mediates our experience of reality is constituted by a fundamental irresolvable unfamiliarity. This unfamiliarity is ordinarily concealed from us and only occasionally bursts into the open as recalcitrant and perplexing, thereby producing uncanniness.

Freud builds on this understanding of the uncanny by directing his attention to temporality. He argues that uncanniness is not simply—or not even necessarily—about an uncertainty in how to

categorize something anomalous. At stake instead is a conflict between our current, seemingly confident way of understanding a phenomenon, and an earlier, seemingly superseded and "repressed" orientation that threatens to reemerge and confound us. For example, lifelike dolls may be uncanny, according to Freud, because we harbor unconscious traces of childish or "primitive" animistic beliefs that have been repressed through socialization and normal psychic development but that may reemerge to disrupt our conviction that dolls, after all, cannot be alive. The encounter with an ambiguously animate doll, then, produces a "conflict of judgment," a disquieting intuition that our old and discarded beliefs may in fact have been truer than our new ideas. In other situations, the repressed that returns may not be a "belief" at all but instead an infantile complex—like fear of castration—that reemerges as an uncanny feeling through association with some seemingly unrelated phenomenon (in Freud's analysis of E.T.A. Hoffmann's The Sandman, this phenomenon is the theft or blinding of eyes). In either case, the uncanny encounter is characterized by a play of familiarity and strangeness—what was once familiar and homely has become strange and unhomely or unheimlich. The return of the familiar-as-strange renders it uncanny.'"

How does this conceptualization of the uncanny help us understand metaphysical inquiry and its rationalization? It will certainly not do so by taking us to the world of "primitive beliefs" and infantile complexes invoked by Freud. Considerations of temporality and conflicts of judgment are, however, crucial. 'Through rationalization, new orientations toward metaphysical phenomena come to replace old ones—as when rationalist discourses disparage those who consult with occult specialists as superstitious. But this substitution seems never to be complete, and there are situations in which traces of older ideas and attachments reassert themselves, producing feelings of uncanniness. A science-minded person who consults an occult specialist "for fun," for example, Prmay encounter inexplicable phenomena that lead to disorientation and the experience of fear and disquiet.

The effects of uncanniness need not be limited to the production of disorientation. In this book, I

examine uncanny moments also for the opportunities they open up for new pathways of questioning and rationalized activity, propelling practitioners forward in ways that push against and expand individual and collective horizons. One way to theorize these moments is to probe the uncanny feeling's affinity with wonder and the latter's connection to curiosity. In Persian psychoanalytic literature, unheimlich has been translated as ashnagharibi, or "familiar-strangeness," where "strangeness" is denoted using the same term (gharib) that also refers to the occult. Gharib commonly appears in conjunction with a twin concept, `ajib, which means "strange" or "wondrous." In the premodern period, the conjunction `ajib va gharib often appeared in manuals dedicated to the "wonders of creation," a genre of texts similar to the European mirabilia. Muslim theorists of the wondrous understood the emotion of wonder (ta `ajjub) as the starting point of knowledge, a view consistent with the Greek understanding of the same emotion as the origin of philosophy. Some set themselves the task of cultivating wonder in their readers in order to draw attention to the magnificent order of God's cosmos.

Could the uncanny be similarly thought as an incitement to inquiry? Historians of witchcraft, demon-possession, and spiritual manifestations in Europe and North America—all of which have unmistakable uncanny qualities to them—have shown how these phenomena provided occasions for scientific experimentation and questioning. Anthropologists studying similar subjects have also argued that the uncanny can become a prod to knowledge. Even so, when the uncanny feeling enters into anthropological analysis, it is too often collapsed into discussions of witchcraft, usually in the context of suspicion, accusation, and cancellation. I probe instead the ways in which the uncanny arouses curiosity, even (or perhaps especially) as it instills a sense of dread. This approach allows me to examine metaphysical inquiries as avantgarde practices that lie at the forefront of societal shifts and provide useful diagnostics of larger transformations.

The uncanniness of rationalization takes a different form in each of the three parts in this book. In part 1, we read about encounters with rammals, occult

specialists who led an inconspicuous and relatively unproblematic existence before the twentieth century but whom modern rationalization relegated to the margins of respectable inquiry, disparaging them as charlatans and purveyors of superstitious nonsense. Yet this rationalization has only been partially successful, and those who encounter rammals sometimes face the uncanny feeling that the latter may genuinely possess incredible powers, throwing their grasp of what truly counts as reasonable or superstitious into turmoil. Part 2 focuses on attempts since the early twentieth century to formulate scientific concepts, models, and methods through which to understand the metaphysical in ways that are hospitable to modern reason. These rationalizing moves have in part responded to accusations by secularist and materialist intellectuals that metaphysical conceptions amount to so much baseless speculation. But again, they have only partially succeeded. Those who subscribe to scientific models of the metaphysical are forced to contend with skeptical discourses that similarly appeal to the authority of science, producing the uncomfortable feeling that metaphysical pursuits may not be so easily justified.

In part 3, I shift attention to attempts after the 1980-88 war with Iraq to formulate new exemplars for pious discipline, just as Iranian society began to undergo widespread social transformations keyed to economic liberalization. These changes produced anxieties among some segments of the pious population about the viability of a form of life that would accord with God's commands, something they imagined had been more or less realized in the immediate aftermath of the 1979 revolution and in the ensuing eight-year war. The new pious models, recently deceased "friends of God" renowned for their feats of asceticism and spectacular marvels, were introduced partially as substitutes for revolutionaries and war martyrs, whose activist example was more suited for social circumstances now relegated to the past. But these models, too, have generated their share of disorientation and alienation, as pious seekers attempt to reconcile the imperative toward moral self-cultivation with the instability they perceive in forms of moral verification that have become increasingly

entangled with bureaucratic power. No less an entity than the pious conscience has been rendered uncanny.

In all of these instances, uncanny disruptions have not so much put an end to projects of rationalization as opened up new paths along which such projects may be pursued. What makes metaphysical experiments uncanny, that is, also grants them an edginess or avant-garde quality that pushes the envelopes of existing norms and produces new forms of sociality. These possibilities include allowing oneself to be thrilled and entertained in the indeterminacy of an occult encounter (chapters 8 and 9), the justification of metaphysical inquiries in terms of personal experience or the pursuit of psychological calm (chapters 17 and 18), and the technologization of self-knowledge to overcome the radical unreliability of the pious conscience (chapter 24). The picture that comes into focus as the chapters proceed is therefore not one of unilinear rationalistic progress but of the increasing multiplicity of rationalized possibilities.

Approaching the Metaphysical

I was forced to come to grips with the uncanny very early in my research. In 2007, while still in the initial stages of my dissertation project, a Turkish graduate student warned me to be cautious, as the subject of my research could drive me to madness. This was something I had heard repeatedly in early interviews in Tehran, but I was taken aback when the same warning came to haunt me in Cambridge. Late at night some time later, I was chatting with my younger brother online when he sent me video clips of the newly released Tim Burton horror musical, Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street. I reminded him that I had a phobia of movie scenes depicting the slitting of throats, especially in the setting of a barbershop, and that I imagined this had something to do with an assassination scene in a historical drama I had viewed on Iranian television as a child. My brother prodded me to watch the scenes and I finally obliged, finding them altogether as horrid as I had expected.

I went to sleep a few minutes afterward and was immediately tormented by nightmares. At one point I found myself in a state between sleep and wakefulness, staring at the curtains as they gently danced in the ghostly moonlight. It then seemed to me that the window behind the curtains was creeping open of its own accord. My home had suddenly become unhomely. Still half-asleep, I surprised myself by asking aloud, "Am I being possessed by jinn?" As if on cue, three ominous figures strode into my bedroom and stood next to my bed. I climbed out to face them and recognized the person in the middle, a Canadian friend with whom I often chatted online. The two large beings flanking her sides were dark and menacing but featureless. Still distressed by my half-dreams, I mumbled to my friend that I thought I might be possessed. She stomped toward me like a giant reptile, clutched my two shoulders with her large hands, and proceeded to lick my nose like a snake. I awoke with a scream.

The next morning, I told myself that my research would prove very difficult if I were to lose my mental composure as a result of uncanny encounters of the sort I had endured overnight. My solution was to actively deny the reality of anything occult or supernatural, to keep my topic of study at arm's length as an anthropological object rather than as something that could trouble the boundaries of my understanding of reality. During fieldwork the following year, my interlocutors would occasionally ask me a version of this question: "Now that you have done all this research, what have you seen that you would consider really metaphysical?" My answer was always a standard anthropological one that would inevitably disappoint them. The point of my research, I said, was not to definitively distinguish real from unreal but rather to identify the criteria and procedures by which people made such distinctions. It was only toward the end of my research that I made the realization that my active denial of metaphysical phenomena was preventing me from understanding that I had been engaged in a metaphysical inquiry just like my interlocutors. The chief difference between us was that I deliberately structured my inquiry through a particular affective discipline (of distance and denial) that most of my interlocutors did not share, even if their inquiries were also shot through with both disciplined and undisciplined affects (virtuous caution being one of them).

As a result of deliberate choices that I made early on in my research and sustained for the most part through my fieldwork, the materials I collected for this book are drawn from extensive observations and interviews but are rarely based on anything that could count as direct "experiential" evidence of metaphysical phenomena (my nightmarish experience after viewing Tim Burton's throat-slitting movie scenes being an exception). Even when I actively participated in my interlocutors' practices—among them exorcisms with the Cosmic Mystics and an occasion in which I helped a self-described witch write a spell to make trouble for her ex-boyfriend—I did so with the consciousness that I was just playing along. A proponent of the ontological turn in anthropology could justifiably accuse me of failing to open myself up to my interlocutors' "alternative realities," although I would respond that a stance of cautious distance and even denial and ridicule was not foreign to them. While my interlocutors sometimes argued that denial would close me off to witnessing or understanding some phenomena, they did not consider such a stance to mark the boundaries of a different reality. Some of them practiced very similar distancing moves, as we will see.

Regardless of what one thinks of my choices about how to conduct my research, I can acknowledge that a different researcher more amenable to an experiential style of ethnography would have produced a very different text from the present one. On the other hand, my practiced self-distancing allowed me to explore things that I would not have otherwise been able to observe had I been continually tormented by nightmares, or worse, descended into madness as my interlocutors had warned. My cautious but deliberate "anthropological atheism" was the very condition of possibility for researching this book.

The research that grounds my arguments includes not only ethnographic and interview data but also textual and archival materials. I spent about two years in Tehran—including a continuous fourteen-month stretch in 2008 and 2009—meeting occult practitioners and their clients, attending seminars teaching new forms of spirituality, participating in occultist web forums, visiting gatherings of devotees of friends of God, and tracking news reports,

commentaries, and published research on these subjects. Even though the bulk of my material is gleaned from observations and interviews in 2006 and later, I have drawn on older historical sources in two ways. First, I conducted archival and textual research on trends in the century before the 1979 revolution, particularly on the reception of French Spiritism but also the legal mechanisms through which the modern Iranian state attempted to tackle what it saw as a problem of superstition. Second, I have drawn on scholarship on the premodern Islamic world on such matters as the delimitation of nonsense, the development of the occult sciences, the place of wonder in pedagogy and entertainment, and the rise of Shi`i mysticism. For most of this premodern material, I have relied on the scholarship of others, including some excellent work that began to be published just as I was completing my own research. In some instances I have abandoned caution and overstepped my disciplinary training to engage with the premodern primary sources myself.

Each of the three parts that follows begins with a chapter consisting of a single extended narrative recounted to me by one of my interlocutors. The rest of the chapters progressively unpack the most important issues raised in these inaugurating stories, usually by drawing on additional ethnographic and historical material. I do not attempt a fully exhaustive treatment of the opening chapters, however, preferring to leave the reader with a sense of the messiness of ordinary life and its recalcitrance before any authorial effort to provide an all-encompassing, cogent, intellectual explanation. In the conclusion, I return to the problem of the rationalization of metaphysical inquiries and their relationship with Shi`i Islamic reason.

The Lynx and the Telescope, The Parallel Worlds of Federico Cesi and Galileo by Paolo Galluzzi, Translated by Peter Mason [Scientific and Learned Cultures and Their Institutions, Brill Academic, 9789004342316]

The Lynx and the Telescope challenges the traditional interpretation of a programmatic convergence between the visions of Galileo and Cesis Academy, while offering a new interpretation

of the dynamics that led to the condemnation of Galileo in 1633.

Contents

Excerpt:

In the virtually endless bibliography on Galileo, Cesi and the First Academy of the Lincei the contributions that propose a detailed analysis of the relations between the Tuscan scientist and the Roman Prince, comparing their respective cultural projects, the visions from which they drew inspiration and the methods that they practised, can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Even more surprisingly, we still lack an exhaustive intellectual biography of Federico Cesi, a critical reconstruction that throws light on the motivations that guided his brief but intense existence, on his points of reference, on how he experienced the encounter with Galileo and reacted to the celestial novelties, to his mechanico-corpuscular analysis of physical phenomena and to his thesis of the mathematical structure of the Book of Nature. In a word, how did Cesi perceive the relation between

Galileo's innovative project and the research agenda that he had drawn up as an adolescent and that had led him to found the Accademia dei Lincei?

Shifting our point of view to Galileo's perception of the motivations and intellectual commitment of his generous and affectionate Patron, the panorama appears even more depressing. One would search in vain for scholarly contributions which focus on the Tuscan scientist's evaluation of the priorities of Cesi and the judgment that he formed of the way in which the Prince and his collaborators interpreted the role of supporters and promoters of his new conception of the universe and of the relations between man and nature.

In the course of what can be defined as a new season of studies, opened thirty years ago by the contributions of Giuseppe Olmi, the cliché of the 'Galilean Academy', or rather of its 'conversion' to the new science after the Tuscan scientist's association, has appeared increasingly problematic.

The longstanding success of the image of the Lincei as a `Galilean Academy' has prevented a correct interpretation of the way — neither passive, nor subaltern — in which Cesi and the founding members experienced Galileo's clamorous arrival on the scene and the conflicts in which he became embroiled. Similarly, Galileo's perception of the programme and goals of the Academy and of the activities and studies of its Patron have long appeared to scholars as topics of marginal interest.

The present work aims at filling this striking lacuna in the historiography on the First Academy. I set myself the task of viewing Cesi and his closest collaborators through the eyes of Galileo, and Galileo through the eyes of Cesi. Focusing on the documents that illustrate the dynamics of a relationship that developed over the course of twenty years of continuous physical and epistolary contact, a significantly different picture emerges.

The subtitle of this work expresses my provisional conclusions. Due to the considerable differences that characterise their visions and their reform projects, it is neither possible nor useful to consider the personalities of Galileo and Cesi as perfectly

aligned. Their relationship can be more adequately represented by the image of two parallel lines that, while directed at a common target, never meet. Both men set out with a resolute determination to demolish the traditional system of knowledge, not only in the sphere of natural philosophy. However, the instruments and methods with which they confronted that challenge and the results that they hoped to achieve appear in many respects far from converging.

The sincere and loyal collaboration established between Cesi and Galileo was based on their full awareness of what might be defined, to use an oxymoron, as divergent convergence. They needed each other, even if they both knew that they would be able to proceed together along only a part of the journey on which they had embarked.

Motivated by the vision conceived many years earlier under the influence of authors (Della Porta, Heckius, Telesio, Persio, Campanella, Ficino and Paracelsus) whom it would be difficult to associate with the Tuscan scientist, Cesi strove to establish an organic link between the adventure he had undertaken and the new methods and worlds revealed by Galileo. Though not without elements of ambiguity, Federico convinced himself that their trajectories were substantially convergent: the Prince and the Academy would complete the work begun by Galileo, extending his rigorous researches on the structure of the universe to the no less important project of casting light on phenomena on the surface of the Earth, in its bowels and in its atmosphere. In this way Cesi hoped to demonstrate that the same vital principles operate in the heavens explored by Galileo thanks to the telescope and in the animal, plant and even mineral kingdoms on which he focused his gaze.

This was the image that Cesi and his closest collaborators, above all Stelluti and Faber, publicly disseminated to underline the direct continuity and full integration of the work and aims of the Academy with the scientific endeavours of Galileo.

As for the Tuscan scientist, one receives the impression that, if he had ever tried to do so, he soon abandoned the attempt to establish thematic and methodological convergences with the

programmes that were dear to the Princeps of the Lincei.

The closest point of convergence between Cesi and Galileo was reached in their shared conviction of the fluid, unitary and corruptible nature of the heavens. However, even in their interpretation of this principle noteworthy differences in their personalities and expectations, as well as in their overall vision of nature and its operations, clearly emerge. Also the documents that bear witness to the generous and impassionate support that Cesi offered to Galileo in his dramatic clashes with the Church authorities betray their different views on the significance of those battles, on the objectives to be attained, and how to estimate and, above all, to accept the risks that that enterprise entailed.

My research on the relations between Galileo and Cesi, which began many years ago, led to a first result in the lecture that I delivered at the meeting organized by the Accademia dei Lincei on 16 December 2011 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the induction of Galileo.' Research conducted for the preparation of that presentation, which was limited to a reconstruction of the first encounter between Galileo and Cesi in Rome in the winter of 1611, convinced me that it would be worthwhile to widen the perspective following the evolution of their personal and intellectual relations, as well as of the circles with which they were connected, down to Federico's death in 1630.

During the preparation of this work, I have contracted profound debts of gratitude towards many friends and colleagues. I discussed the conclusions to which my research was leading on several occasions with Tullio Gregory, who provided continuous encouragement and a determinant support to the publication of this work in the prestigious Academy's editorial series Storia dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Thanks to his stimulus and the efforts of the then Vice President (now President) of the Lincei, Alberto Quadrio Curzio, the Institution founded by Cesi has drawn up an ambitious programme of pub¬lications of the sources for the history of the Academy. Massimo Bucciantini, Michele Camerota, Giuseppe Olmi and Patrizia Ruffo read this work before it went into print and offered valuable suggestions. I am

indebted to Marco Guardo for enabling me to consult texts and documents that would otherwise have been extremely difficult to access.

As the reader will see, I have examined a not inconsiderable quantity of sources bearing on Galileo, Cesi and the history of the First Accademy of the Lincei. In carrying out this vast programme I benefitted enormously from the on-line consultation of the manuscripts of the Archivio Linceo, published on the website of the Museo Galileo in Florence,' as well as from the wealth of primary sources and critical literature held by the library of the Museo Galileo and from the competent assistance of the library staff.

Roman patriciate. No solemn funeral was organised for him. No public eulogy of his industrious life, of his impressive writings, or of the Academy that he had founded was recited. This silence is striking, especially bearing in mind his intellectual calibre, his important social relations and the authority of the patrician family to which he belonged.

The Prince's corpse did not receive the honourable treatment that had been reserved only a few years earlier for the mortal remains of his cousin, Duke Virginio Cesarini, Vice-princeps of the Lincei. Even his burial place in the Church of St Cecilia in Acquasparta passed unnoticed until 1872, when the family vault was opened and the solemn identification of the remains of the Princeps of the Linceans was conducted.' However, it was not until 1920 that a celebratory inscription in his honour was appended in the Cesi family chapel. And it was only at the end of the nineteenth century that an inscription recording the Prince's name and achievements was set in the wall of his Roman residence in Via della Maschera d'oro, seat of the Academy and the setting for meetings between personalities of remarkable talent.

After Cesi's death, neither he nor his writings were mentioned for almost two centuries. The Apiarium was extremely rare and its structure too tortuous for the reader; the Thesaurus Mexicanus was published only twenty years after his death, by which time scientific progress had turned that innovative work into an outdated resource. Its publication did not pay full justice to the intellectual energies and considerable financial resources that

the Prince had put into that monumental work, nor to the determinant role that he personally, as well as the Academy and its associates, had played in it. Finally, Federico's Tabulae Phytosophicae had no place in the lively debates on systems of classification of the natural world of the following two centuries.

Not only did the memory of Cesi fade into obscurity for a long time, but so did that of the brief life of his academic initiative. The only conspicuous post mortem homage to the Prince and to the Linceans was that provided by Galileo in the Dialogue concerning the two chief world systems. The Tuscan scientist qualified himself as 'Accademico Linceo' on the frontispiece of the publication printed two years after Federico's death. Moreover, in the animated discussions between Salviati, Sagredo and Simplicio, he inserted numerous asides in which he made his own voice directly heard. The person whose authoritative views were repeatedly evoked by Salviati was not presented to the readers in his official capacity as Philosopher and Mathematician of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, but as a fellow of the Lincean Academy. Galileo had devised that solution when he was still convinced that the Dialogue would be issued as an official publication of the Academy. He maintained it after the Prince had departed from the scene in sincere recognition of the generous and disinterested support that he had received from Cesi and from the institution that he had founded. It is not by chance that six years later, when the memory of the Academy was completely eclipsed, Galileo was to renew this gesture of gratitude in the Two new sciences, placing great emphasis on his Lincean affiliation. At that point, behind the voice of the Academician evoked by Salviati glimmered the disturbing image of a man condemned by the Church for being vehemently suspected of heresy.

Galileo too departed this life amid a deafening silence. No public funeral was arranged for the Philosopher and Mathematician of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, whose name was familiar not only to the most distinguished natural philosophers and astronomers throughout the world, but even to the most powerful sovereigns of Europe. Nor did anyone challenge the ecclesiastical authorities by daring to deliver a solemn funeral oration to celebrate his memory. In January 1642, the unadorned coffin in which his corpse had been laid was furtively accompanied by a few fond friends and pupils from his home in Arcetri, the gilded prison of the last twelve melancholy years of his life, to a small room in the Florentine Basilica of Santa Croce, where it remained inaccessible to the faithful and to visitors for almost a century.'

The posthumous fortunes, however, of the author of the Sidereus Nuncius and of the Princeps of the Linceans did not run parallel. Galileo was not forgotten, nor did his works disappear from circulation. Paradoxically, the condemnation made him even more famous, above all in Tuscany, where he continued to play the role of mentor of Medici scientific patronage in cleverly disguised forms. Thanks to the early translation of his major works into Latin, Galileo remained at the centre of discussions among the protagonists of the scientific revolution and of the new philosophy in France, England, Germany and the Low Countries: Gassendi, Huygens, Newton and many other prestigious authors did not hesitate to give him credit for having opened up and considerably advanced a radical transformation of the traditional conception of nature and of the laws governing its operations. Nor did interest in Galileo diminish in later centuries. The Tuscan scientist has remained the point of reference in debates on the laws of nature, on the position and purposes of mankind in Creation, on the relations between science and religion and on freedom of thought down to our own times.

The posthumous fate of Cesi was completely different. After a lengthy absence from the collective memory, he gradually re-emerged from oblivion in the early nineteenth century. Baldassare Odescalchi was the first to focus his attention on Federico, on his companions in adventure and on the activities of the First Academy, demonstrating that it had not been a marginal episode but rather one worthy of being brought back to light" Odescalchi recovered and published the original documents that illustrate the vicissitudes of the early years of the Academy. In his remarkable essay on Cesi's intellectual vision, the image of the Prince finally assumed plausible features, revealing the

objectives that had inspired the Lincei for over a quarter of a century. Odescalchi clearly emphasized the difference in the methods and views of Galileo and Cesi. Finally, he underlined the utopian nature of the prescriptions penned by Cesi in the Lynceographum, showing that they had had virtually no impact on the actual life of the institution or on the conduct of its associates. Thanks to Odescalchi, after a long separation, the images of Galileo and Cesi were once again brought together.

However, it would have been impossible to bring into focus the project that had fired Cesi with enthusiasm and the foundations on which his admiration for Galileo rested without the intense, passionate and rigorous scholarly and editorial work carried out by Giuseppe Gabrieli over the span of forty years. Without the monumental Carteggio Linceo, without the innumerable series of extraordinary contributions that Gabrieli devoted to Cesi, to his collaborators and to the events that marked its brief existence, the renaissance of the last thirty years in studies of the history of the First Academy would have been inconceivable. Gone from memory for centuries, the writings of the Princeps of the Linceans are now the object not only of in-depth analysis, but also of critical editions. This new season of studies has contributed to a clearer picture of the commitment, energy and brilliance with which Cesi pursued his ambitious objectives.

By now it should be obvious that to restore identity and dignity to Cesi's project and to the role played in it by Galileo, the cliché of the 'Galilean' Academy must be abandoned as well as that of the Linceans' alleged 'conversion' to the new science after the induction of the Tuscan scientist in 1611. When comparing the personalities of Galileo and Cesi we should not speak of an identity of vision, but of a strategic convergence based on the shared conviction of the need to promote a radical reform of traditional knowledge. The horizons on which they had fixed their gaze were not only distant from, but in many respects irreducible to one another: the lynx and the telescope; the Theatre and the Book of Nature; the chemical interactions at corpuscular level and the mechanical actions of particles; the freedom of thought in

natural philosophy submissive to the superior authority of Holy Scripture, and the conception of the full autonomy of the Book of Nature from the Book of Scripture.

The image of 'parallel worlds' portrays the nature of the relations between Cesi and Galileo more effectively than that of the alleged 'conversion' of the Prince and the Linceans to the new science. From this perspective it becomes possible to focus on the lucid plan and on the expectations that led Cesi to found the Academy, as well as on the originality of his vision and on the relevance of the results that he achieved in the course of his brief and laborious life. <>

The Royal Art of Poison: Filthy Palaces, Fatal Cosmetics, Deadly Medicine, and Murder Most [St. Martin's Press, 9781250140869]

"You'll be as appalled at times as you are entertained." —Bustle, one of The 17 Best Nonfiction Books Coming Out In June 2018

"A heady mix of erudite history and delicious gossip." —Aja Raden, author of Stoned

In the Washington Post roundup, "What your favorite authors are reading this summer," A.J. Finn says, "I want to read The Royal Art of Poison, Eleanor Herman's history of poisons."

Hugely entertaining, a work of pop history that traces the use of poison as a political—and cosmetic—tool in the royal courts of Western Europe from the Middle Ages to the Kremlin today

The story of poison is the story of power. For centuries, royal families have feared the gut-roiling, vomit-inducing agony of a little something added to their food or wine by an enemy. To avoid poison, they depended on tasters, unicorn horns, and antidotes tested on condemned prisoners. Servants licked the royal family's spoons, tried on their underpants and tested their chamber pots.

Ironically, royals terrified of poison were unknowingly poisoning themselves daily with their cosmetics, medications, and filthy living conditions. Women wore makeup made with mercury and lead. Men rubbed turds on their bald spots.

Physicians prescribed mercury enemas, arsenic skin cream, drinks of lead filings, and potions of human fat and skull, fresh from the executioner. The most gorgeous palaces were little better than filthy latrines. Gazing at gorgeous portraits of centuries past, we don't see what lies beneath the royal robes and the stench of unwashed bodies; the lice feasting on private parts; and worms nesting in the intestines.

In The Royal Art of Poison, Eleanor Herman combines her unique access to royal archives with cutting-edge forensic discoveries to tell the true story of Europe's glittering palaces: one of medical bafflement, poisonous cosmetics, ever-present excrement, festering natural illness, and, sometimes, murder.

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Excerpt:

In 1670, at the glittering court of Louis XIV, the beautiful twenty-six-year-old princess Henrietta, duchesse d'Orléans, sips from a cup of chicory water, clutches her side, and cries out, "I am poisoned!" Her ladies undress her and put her to bed, where she vomits and soils herself repeatedly. The ceaseless pain is like a thousand red-hot knives slash¬ing and burning her insides. She writhes in a tangle of sweat-soaked sheets, screaming. She begs God to make the pain stop. She whimpers and groans, and falls silent.

By the time the princess dies, nine horrifying hours after the initial attack, it is a mercy. Given her symptoms, it appears that she was indeed poisoned. The suspected murderer? Her husband, Philippe, duc d'Orléans, the king's vindictive brother, furious at her for exiling his male lover.

In researching my books on royal love affairs, I was intrigued by numerous such stories of the young, the beautiful, the talented and powerful, cut down before their time. For centuries, almost every death of a relatively young royal was rumored to have

been caused by poison. But was it poison? Or had they all died of natural causes?

I decided to return to this absorbing topic, which so adeptly combines my love of forensic crime shows with my passion for the past. I soon found myself up to my elbows in the grisly, the astonishing, the tragic, and the hilarious. I learned how to perform a sixteenth-century autopsy and embalming—not something for the faint of heart. Wide-eyed, I read Renaissance beauty recipe books whose ingredients included mercury, arsenic, lead, feces, urine, and human fat. I dove into modern scientific papers on the exhumations of royal bodies found to be riddled with a variety of toxic materials. And I discovered the elaborate—and to us comical— poison-prevention protocols at royal courts.

As I delved into this world, I learned that palaces were bursting with many kinds of poison, not all of them deadly doses of arsenic intended to kill. Gazing at the gorgeous portraits of centuries past, we don't see what lies beneath the royal robes flashing with diamonds: the stench of unwashed bodies; the lice feasting on scalps, armpits, and private parts; the lethal bacteria from contaminated water and poorly prepared food; and the excruciating cancers eating away at vital organs. We can't smell the nauseating odors of overflowing chamber pots or the urine-soaked staircases where courtiers routinely relieved themselves. We don't glimpse the barbaric medical treatments more dangerous than the original illness itself, or elixirs designed to beautify that sometimes killed.

To bring you into this world of sublime beauty and wretched filth, I first investigate the palace poison culture of prevention, protocols, and antidotes, followed by chapters on deadly cosmetics, fatal physicians, and the royals' perilously unhealthy living conditions. I then examine twenty cases of royal personages rumored to have been poisoned, from the renowned, such as Napoleon and Mozart, to the obscure, such as a fourteenth-century Italian warlord and a sixteenth-century queen of Navarre, household names in their own time but mostly forgotten in ours.

While palace physicians were often completely baffled when it came to determining the cause of

an illness and death, modern science can shed light on what really happened to our tragic princess and many others who died mysteriously. In these chapters I examine their lives, their deaths, and their exhumations and modern analyses, if these have occurred; if not, I provide a modern diagnosis of their symptoms and probable cause of death.

What I have found is that people living in terror of poison were, in fact, poisoning themselves every day of their lives, through their medicine, cosmetics, and living conditions. At Europe's dazzling royal courts, beneath a façade of bejeweled beauty, there festered illness, ignorance, filth, and— sometimes—murder.

Nor is poisoning of one's political rivals hermetically sealed in the past. As my final chapter will show, in some countries political assassination by poison is as alive and well as ever it was in the sinister royal courts of the Renaissance.

The Poison Hall of Fame

Most painful death: Strychnine, which causes the entire body to spasm in excruciating, violent convulsions until the victim dies from exhaustion or asphyxiation two to three hours after exposure.

Easiest death: Hemlock. Numbness spreads slowly from the legs upward until it paralyzes the heart and lungs. In 399 BC, the Greek philosopher Socrates, condemned to death by the Athenian government, drank a cup of hemlock surrounded by friends and spoke cheerfully until the moment before he died.

Fastest acting: Cyanide. Inhaling a high concentration causes a coma with seizures and cardiac arrest within minutes. A major component of Zyklon B, the gas used by the Nazis to exterminate Jews in concentration camps.

Most disgusting symptoms: Long-term mercury exposure. Horrific bad breath. Black teeth. Excessive, stinking black saliva that causes the victim to constantly spit. Loss of teeth, jawbone, tongue, palate, and gum tissue. Oozing sores on the throat, lungs, mouth, and inside the cheeks. Lifelong tremors, staggering, and convulsions.

The biggest stomach blaster: Arsenic, which causes hours of projectile vomiting and explosive diarrhea

until the victim is so severely dehydrated he or she closely resembles a corn husk.

The worst poison for your complexion: TCCD, which within hours of exposure creates blackheads, cysts, pustules, tumors, bloating, and pockmarks in the face called chloracne.

Poisons that turn friends into enemies: Chronic lead and mercury poisoning causes violent mood swings, paranoia, insomnia, outbursts of anger, and depression. Mercury- and lead-based paints likely contributed to the mood swings of history's most temperamental artists.

The term "mad as a hatter" comes from hat makers who inhaled mercury fumes while turning fur into felt. Interestingly, the introduction of mercury to hat making was due to the spread of syphilis across Europe in the sixteenth century. Hat makers collected their own urine to remove the fur from animal skin, and those hat makers undergoing mercury cures for syphilis produced superior felt. Mercury, they realized, must be excreted in urine. Hat makers started adding mercury directly to the felt-making mixture.

The Kitchen Shortcut Bible: More than 200 Recipes to Make Real Food Real Fast by Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough, Photographs by Eric Medsker [Little, Brown and Company, 9780316509718]

The ultimate collection of recipes to make real food, real fast--with hundreds of ways to cook smarter, not harder.

The Kitchen Shortcut Bible is for all of us who love to cook, but never seem to have enough time. Rather than a book of way-too-clever hacks, this is a collection of more than 200 ingenious recipes that supercharge your time in the kitchen without sacrificing high quality or fresh flavor.

Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough come to this, their definitive guide to shortcut cooking, after twenty-nine cookbooks and decades of experience in the kitchen. Not only do they know about putting great meals on the table, they also know that most people's nightly question isn't "what's for dinner," but "what's for dinner in the next half hour?"

They've got risotto in minutes, no-fry chicken parm, and melted ice cream pound cake. But these recipes aren't merely "semi-homemade." They've also got slow cooker confits, no-boil stuffed cabbage, and a fine holiday turkey straight out of the freezer, as well as new ways to think about sheet pan suppers, Asian noodle dishes without a wok, and no-churn ice creams. And no MacGuyvering either! There are lots of new ways to use the kitchen tools you already own, imparting concrete shortcuts that save time and make something good into something great.

When dinner is a problem to be solved, this is your cheat sheet.

Excerpt:

Let's just get this out of the way up front:
Work with sharp knives.
Chop two onions, not one, and freeze the rest.
Cook once but eat twice, repurposing leftovers.
Start with a clean kitchen and clean as you cook.
Work with a garbage bowl on the counter.
You might be able to recite those in your sleep. All of these rules are tried-and-true advice for quick cooking, repeated in hundreds of books and on zillions of websites.

They're not what this book is about. Instead, The Kitchen Shortcut Bible is about making the food you love—but preparing it faster, using common kitchen tools in ways you might not have imagined or working with standard ingredients that are long overdue for an updated approach. The book is also about rethinking recipes in unexpected ways: using the flavor punch of a jar of store-bought caponata for ratatouille, or the convenience of a package of wonton wrappers for crisp cookies, all while eating real food that's healthy and inexpensive. What's more, this cookbook is not about absurd gimmicks no one will ever use: making punch bowl ice rings in a Bundt pan or dicing hardcooked eggs by passing them through a wire-mesh rack. Ever seen the mashed-up edges of that egg afterward? Ever tried to clean the rack? Blech.

In fact, this is a book of recipes, not hacks. Yes, there are plenty of tips and tricks throughout, some a little nerdy, some very cheffy. But it's important to realize from the get-go that these inspirational

flashes and real-world solutions have been made subservient to the recipes themselves. There's no chapter called "More from Your Wok" or "Small Gadget Hacks." Rather, the recipes are arranged in chapters about the way they are in most cookbooks: breakfast, snacks, bigger meals, desserts. In the end, we believe that the best shortcuts deliver dishes, condiments, sauces, and the like, not just clever cooking ideas: a flavorful, quick applesauce with a potato ricer, or a complex sauce that magically tastes as if you let it simmer all day just by adding a few tablespoons of peanut butter, or rich and irresistible pudding from your microwave when you need a mug full of instant comfort.

After making a few of these recipes, we hope you'll adapt the techniques to make even more meals to fit your taste. Take our pasta colander suppers. You'll put most of the ingredients in a colander and boil the pasta in a saucepan, then pour the pasta and its hot water over those ingredients, blanching or softening them and turning the whole thing into a nomess, one-pot dinner. The variations you can create from this technique are endless.

But don't jump out on your own at first. Some of these techniques are unconventional, so follow the recipe until you nail it down—then give it a twist. Such advice sounds schoolmarmish, but it's a good strategy when you're reinventing the layer cake (using just a food processor) or even preparing something as simple as bacon and eggs (using a single baking sheet).

Some recipes are one-offs. And some are presented in groups that show the many uses for a single kitchen tool, an unusual technique, or a too-often overlooked ingredient. Some recipes are designed to make weeknight fare (chicken cooked right out of the freezer) and some are admittedly fancier (a better way to roast a whole duck). Throughout, there are small, informal, narrative recipes tucked among the larger ones. All of our recipes show off a little Yankee ingenuity.

All this on-and-on about the recipes brings up a bigger question: What constitutes a shortcut? Well, sure, it should save time, that modern scarcity. If a new way through a classic recipe shaves off a few minutes, it counts—although this book is not just a book about cooking faster. We've also created shortcuts that simplify techniques to yield better results. Better without more effort isn't the usual way quick-cooking books judge their results; but again, quick isn't the only way to judge the value of a shortcut. If you veer off the crowded main road and take a back road through more beautiful countryside to arrive at the same place at the same time, you'll probably take that smaller road again and again. And you'll probably call it a shortcut, as in "that shortcut I take." Its value is not just in time saved.

In no recipe will you MacGyver a set of pliers or carburetor cleaning wires into a kitchen wand. And you'll never take apart a blender or break the hinge on a cherry pitter for a recipe. Instead, you'll use tools as they are, all of them common cooking implements, many the familiar graduation and wedding gift favorites that sit on a shelf year after year.

Much of the work for this book gets done in the Test Kitchen Notes that accompany most of the recipes (or that are found in the introductory material to some recipe sets). There are hundreds of ideas on how to speed things up. Many of these can be applied to recipes far beyond the one at hand.

Admittedly, a few of our shortcuts are whimsical to-do moments. For example, we figured out how to make fat, chewy udon noodles with a meat grinder. Our technique doesn't really save you that much time (though it's much quicker than the traditional Japanese method). But the results are so incredible, we had to include the recipe. The same goes for our way of doing a standing rib roast. And paella. These are not traditional shortcut cooking recipes but rather a sort of new way to think through a tried-and-true dish for better results without additional effort (and in the case of the paella, with far less effort).

But most of our recipes deliver in all the most important categories: time saved, convenience added, and most importantly, flavor enhanced. You'll use instant potatoes for the fluffiest gnocchi and store-bought pizza dough for quick, delicious dumplings. You'll make no-cook sauces in advance and freeze them in plastic bags for a slow-cooker

weeknight dinner with almost no work. Just add your protein of choice to the cooker and head off to your day!

And there's much more. Weeknight dinner solutions, all-day entrees finished in minutes, and plain delicious ways to make the dishes you love without standing over a hot stove. Like making individual dinner packets, freezing them, and cooking them straight from the freezer. Or using a slow cooker to turn tuna into the most absurdly delicious Sicilian preserved tuna without much work. Or making risotto in a microwave in mere minutes, without stirring.

So sure, follow the standard shortcut advice: Work with sharp knives, clean as you go, and set out a garbage bowl. But just get cooking. There's time to be saved. Mostly, there are better meals to be eaten. <>

Near-Death Experiences . . . and Others by Robert Gottlieb [Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 9780374219918]

A new collection of immersive essays from the most acclaimed editor of the second half of the twentieth century
This new collection from the legendary editor Robert Gottlieb features twenty or so pieces he's written mostly for The New York Review of Books, ranging from reconsiderations of American writers such as Dorothy Parker, Thornton Wilder, Thomas Wolfe ("genius"), and James Jones, to Leonard Bernstein, Lorenz Hart, Lady Diana Cooper ("the most beautiful girl in the world"), the actor-assassin John Wilkes Booth, the scandalous movie star Mary Astor, and not-yet president Donald Trump.

The writings compiled here are as various as they are provocative: an extended probe into the world of post-death experiences; a sharp look at the biopics of transcendent figures such as Shakespeare, Molière, and Austen; a soap operaish movie account of an alleged affair between Chanel and Stravinsky; and a copious sampling of the dance reviews he's been writing for The New York Observer for close to twenty years. A worthy successor to his expansive 2011 collection, Lives and Letters, and his admired 2016 memoir, Avid Reader, Near-Death Experiences

displays the same insight and intellectual curiosity that have made Gottlieb, in the words of The New York Times's Dwight Garner, "the most acclaimed editor of the second half of the twentieth century."

Robert Gottlieb has been the head of Alfred A. Knopf, the editor in chief of Simon and Schuster, and the editor of The New Yorker. Over the past twenty years he has written extensively for The New York Review of Books, The New Yorker, The New York Times Book Review, and The New York Observer, where he has been the dance critic for many years. He is the author of Sarah: The Life of Sarah Bernhardt, George Balanchine: The Ballet Maker; Lives and Letters, Great Expectations: The Sons and Daughters of Charles Dickens, and Avid Reader. In 2015, he received the annual Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

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After editing The Columbia Review, staging plays at Cambridge, and a stint in the greeting-card department of Macy's, Robert Gottlieb stumbled into a job at Simon and Schuster. By the time he left to run Alfred A. Knopf a dozen years later, he was the editor in chief, having discovered and edited Catch-22 and The American Way of Death, among other bestsellers. At Knopf, Gottlieb edited an astonishing list of authors, including Toni Morrison, John Cheever, Doris Lessing, John le Carré, Michael Crichton, Lauren Bacall, Katharine Graham, Robert Caro, Nora Ephron, and Bill Clinton--not to mention Bruno Bettelheim and Miss Piggy. In Avid Reader, Gottlieb writes with wit and candor about succeeding William Shawn as the editor of The New Yorker, and the challenges and satisfactions of running America's preeminent magazine. Sixty years after joining Simon and Schuster, Gottlieb is still at it--editing, anthologizing, and, to his surprise, writing.

But this account of a life founded upon reading is about more than the arc of a singular career--one that also includes a lifelong involvement with the world of dance. It's about transcendent friendships and collaborations, "elective affinities" and family, psychoanalysis and Bakelite purses, the alchemical relationship between writer and editor, the glory days of publishing, and--always--the sheer exhilaration of work.

Excerpt: Alas, not everything a writer writes seems worthy of being collected—even to the writer. Choosing what to put into this book, I've tried to be disinterested, but no doubt I've included at least a few pieces that might have been left un-resuscitated.

Such is parental love—or ego.

Most of the essays in the first, and longer, part of the book appeared originally in The New York Review of Books. Others appeared in The Atlantic, The New Yorker, The New York Times Book Review, the Los Angeles Times Book Review, The New York Observer, and The Wall Street Journal. The piece on the Trumps was published in the Observer in September 2000: There was no compelling reason to reprint it in my first collection, Lives and Letters, seven years ago; today there's a compelling reason. A few other pieces that painfully got left behind then for reasons of space have been rescued because they seem, at least to me, to be worth rescuing.

The main difference between this book and Lives and Letters is the inclusion in it of twenty-odd of the three hundred or so dance reviews I've published in the Observer since 1999—reviews that I hope have some more than immediate interest. My great friend Janet Malcolm has been urging me to reprint these for years, which is both flattering and unnerving—doesn't she like the rest of my work? If you don't appreciate their appearance here, blame Janet—it's that girl's fault. <>

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