

Islamism and the Left

An essay in two parts

Sir John Jenkins



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Islamists and the Left: An Ideological Affinity

Introduction

The murder of Samuel Paty in France last October dramatically accentuated a set of long-standing concerns about the relationship of various forms of Islamism to the French state and broader French society. It has also raised questions about the position of elements of the French Left, particularly within the universities and the higher commentariat, who were accused of enabling attacks on French *laïcité* (the constitutional principle of secularism in France) through too great an attachment to the tropes of critical theory. As a result, the Macron government proposed an enquiry into what it called “islamo-gauchisme”.¹ This has caused uproar.

There is certainly a debate to be had about the precise nature of the relationship between Islamist and Leftist critiques of the established order in France. But that such a relationship exists is hardly in doubt. The same phenomenon exists in Britain. It has gained in strength over the last two decades, fuelled by a blending of what should by any normal standard be objectively incompatible discourses: this happened partly, in the case of the Left, though folly; in the case of Islamists, by stealth.² We have most recently seen this demonstrated yet again during the protests in London and elsewhere over the conflict between Israel and Hamas, where Islamists and some on the Far Left of British politics employed a common antisemitic discourse.

The question is: how can we now most usefully characterise this relationship and what sort of a challenge, if any, does it pose to the current liberal order in both countries — and more widely?

The two essays that follow examine these issues in detail. They trace the entwined intellectual genealogies of Islamism and varieties of Leftist thought back to 18th and 19th century critics of the European Enlightenment and of instrumental reason – not all of them by any means on what has come to be described as the Left. But all of them shape in some way contemporary anti-capitalist, anti-universalist, anti-Eurocentric and anti-liberal theory and discourse. The way in which their ideas penetrated the Islamic world is complex but instructive. It suggests the relationship is not simply tactical: it is integral to a way of thinking about the world that has come to dominate the social sciences in the western academy. It contests the moral and political foundations of the contemporary western state and has been adapted by Islamists for their own purposes. This has led to an epistemic alliance against the liberal order. The result is a closing down of debate and resistance to a wide range of principles and government policies — from counter-extremism and policing to education, social deprivation and disadvantage and individual equality before the law. It is in our collective interest that the French government succeeds in its attempts to turn back the tide. The first step — as Gilles Kepel has passionately argued — is to understand the challenge and confront it with confidence and fortitude.³ This is

also the task that faces the British government.

What else should be done? This will, after all, be a generational struggle. The dominant discourse in the western social sciences and increasingly in the humanities reflects both the identitarian obsession of Islamists and the Left and their essentialist characterisation of the western state as enduringly and purposefully oppressive and unjust. This discourse – most notoriously in the form of what has become known as critical race theory⁴ – has in the past few years become more widespread in the progressive press, business, the voluntary and cultural sectors, sport and even parts of government. Those who adopt it as protective camouflage will often not fully understand what they are endorsing. There is substantial popular resistance to it.

And even on the Left there are many who reject its implications. But it is dangerous. It is a constant distraction from more urgent tasks. Because it contains no theory of change, simply a range of essentialist positions, granting different privileges to different groups on the basis of an unexaminable taxonomy of victimhood, it is resistant to practical remedies. And most important of all, it corrodes social cohesion, free communication and mutual trust, the underpinnings of any political community. Any government faced with such a challenge to the fundamental principles of the social and political order it represents would need to make a stand.

This is not a matter of legal sanction or coercion. People must be free to make claims of the sort described, even if we believe them to be wrong. But it is equally important that, when they do so, they are required to produce credible evidence which is subject to open debate, rigorous scrutiny and honest challenge. We should ensure – as the government has already undertaken to do⁵ – that those who seek to rebut the claims of others are protected from the intimidation, bullying and often career-ending actions that some have already experienced.

In the end this may require a special body staffed by individuals with the relevant skills and expertise, in order to support those who challenge this increasingly dominant and damaging discourse. The British government could do worse than emulate France and commission its own enquiry into the matter.⁶ Such an enquiry might be tasked among other things with recommending more robust ways of ensuring a greater range of thought within the country's educational and research institutions; enabling and safeguarding reasonable criticism; and further strengthening the obligations of university and other relevant authorities to protect freedom and – as importantly – diversity of both thought and speech.

Islamism and the Left

The Genealogies of Discontent⁷

The reforms to the representational and supervisory structures of Islam in France that President Macron has sought to push forward with renewed urgency since the brutal murder of Samuel Paty in October 2020 have encountered significant resistance, not just from Islamists, but more puzzlingly perhaps from many on the Left of French politics and the progressive wing of the French commentariat. Most recently, there has been an outcry over the announcement⁸ by the Minister of Higher Education and Research, Frédérique Vidal, that she would seek to launch an enquiry through the CNRS (the National Centre for Scientific Research)⁹ into what she has characterised as *islamo-gauchisme* (Islamism-Leftism), which she claims is inflected by the culture wars raging in the Anglosphere.¹⁰ The CNRS, while accepting the commission, quickly distanced itself from its edgier implications.¹¹ Her remarks have been interpreted by many on the Left as a disreputable dog whistle to the supporters of the nationalist Right in France¹² or simple ignorance about the value of the cultural turn in the social sciences.¹³ They deny that anything resembling an alliance between Islamists and the Left exists. It is an illusion, they say, cherished by bad faith actors.¹⁴

This is not a new debate.¹⁵ The term itself seems to have been coined in 2002 by Pierre-André Taguieff, the then director of research at the CNRS, to describe very precisely a phenomenon he documented more extensively in his 2002 book *“La nouvelle Judéophobie”*.¹⁶ In France, Jean Birnbaum,¹⁷ Alain Finkielkraut,¹⁸ Pascal Bruckner¹⁹ and Gilles Kepel (among others)²⁰ have all, in recent years, addressed the same issue in a wider context: the puzzlingly complaisant attitude of some on the political Left to various forms of Islamism – violent and non-violent. It is not simply a French phenomenon. In 2019, for example, the Swiss-Moroccan writer and secular activist, Kacem El Ghazzali, wrote in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, “I criticised political Islam and identity politics. And suddenly I’m a Rightist. Why? The world has simply gone mad. Atheist “progressives” defend the freedom of women to veil. Reactionary Islamists cheer them on. Both agitate against “the white man”. Anyone who doesn’t go along is “radical right”. What’s at stake is enlightenment and free thinking”.²¹ He goes on to point out that it is only in the West that critics of Islamism are accused of being rightist, reactionary or racist: in the Muslim world they are accused instead of being degenerate or apostate.²² He remarks that liberal Muslims are seen by the western Left as inauthentic: hence their fetishisation of the veil and other markers of identity which they construe as expressing the eternal otherness of the Muslim subject – in a sort of ‘reverse orientalism’ (in the words of the distinguished Syrian scholar, the late Sadik al Azm).²³ In Germany, the indefatigable Bassam Tibi (also of Syrian origin) has made similar points for years.²⁴ As has the distinguished historian and theorist (again Syrian), Aziz al Azmeh, from his perches in Budapest and elsewhere.²⁵

In Britain the argument has mostly been left to polemicists such as Douglas Murray and Nick Cohen to make.²⁶ But all have regularly faced the same criticism – of Islamophobia, racism and irresponsible reification of a non-existent phenomenon.

The aim of this paper is not to relitigate these claims and counter claims. Instead, it seeks to consider the question of the relationship between Islamism (in all its forms) and parts of the Left,²⁷ not just in France but more broadly.²⁸ It proceeds from the assumption that such a relationship exists and is not simply tactical.²⁹

In light of these real and obvious connections, the remainder of this paper argues that it is possible to trace the genealogical connections between the two that reflect the way each has come to understand the world, particularly taxonomies of modernity, power, justice and the state. These connections are complex, often indirect and sometimes contradictory. But they are real and important. They create a commonality not simply of tactics but of worldviews. These worldviews are framed in opposition to what we might consider the modern liberal and democratic order, which its critics often prefer to understand as variously neo-liberal, neo-colonial, unjust, racist and exploitative. We have recently seen fresh evidence of this conjuncture – if any were needed – in the way that Islamists and the British Left have rallied together over matters such as Prevent and indeed the Batley Grammar School affair, not through reasoned argument but simply by asserting that certain forms of “discourse” (a key word in this context) are fuelled by Islamophobia (which they claim is a form of racism and therefore of oppressive power) and therefore subject to anathema.³⁰

This is not new. But for anyone who cares about the future direction of the societies in which we live, it is important.³¹

The Enlightenment

In many ways, a key starting point for thinking about the relationship between ‘the Left’³² and Islamism is the phenomenon that has come to be known as the Enlightenment.³³ For present purposes, I take this to mean the period of economic, cultural and social expansion within Europe from the late 17th century onwards that transformed social relations, created new space for associationism and led to the spread of literacy, the expansion of the public sphere, greater toleration of religious difference, an emphasis on rational governance and the spread of secular philosophy, science and art. It is often thought to have culminated – for better or worse - in the French Revolution. This process also produced new forms of political organisation which eventually generated, with many twists and turns, a dominant ideology of liberalism³⁴ underpinned by a discursively rich and often universalist ideology of individual rights and freedoms. It is precisely this ideology that Islamism is said to challenge.

This narrative needs to be treated with some caution, of course. First, in English the term “Enlightenment” to describe the period in question was adopted relatively late. It follows the example of those such as Immanuel Kant,³⁵ who saw the defining characteristic of *Aufklärung* as the application of independent reason to all matters, including religion. The term was then taken up by conservative critics of instrumental reason, who held it responsible for the arrogant excesses of the French *philosophes* and the disasters to which they had allegedly led.³⁶ Second, there were, it is now commonly held, many different Enlightenments. The “Enlightenment” in practice represented a set of different and temporally spaced historical conjunctures, controversies and currents in a dialectical relationship with each other. And third, this dialectic of enlightenment produced its own most severe critics. Indeed, the intellectual genealogy that is sceptical of the claims of reason and the benign and universalist claims of a Eurocentric and humanist modernity winds its way from (say) Vico,³⁷ through Herder, Hamman, Fichte, Schelling, de Maistre, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Lukacs, Marcuse, Adorno, Horkheimer, Lévi-Strauss, Fanon, Memmi, Geertz, Derrida, Deleuze, Barthes, Foucault, de Man and Bourdieu to contemporary critical theory. It has in many ways come to represent the most powerful analytical current in contemporary western social thought, particularly in the Anglosphere.³⁸ And that is to say nothing of Marx and his successors and disciples, who represent a rival, often hostile, intersecting, materialist but equally important and seductive intellectual current.³⁹

The Islamic World

It is also worth noting that the European enlightenment was not the only intellectually reformist movement of the time. There was also significant change⁴⁰ within the Islamic world, often associated with shifts in secular power: for example – within Shi’ism - the rise of the Usuli movement in the first half of the 18th century and – within the Sunni community - that of the Sufi-influenced Sanussiyah in Ottoman North Africa, the Hadith reform programme of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi in late Mughal India and what some scholars⁴¹ have called the “Protestantisation of Islam” with the emergence of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab and the first Saudi emirate in the Arabian peninsula from the 1750s onwards. The emergence of the heterodox Shi’a sect of the Bahai should also perhaps be set in this context.⁴²

The disruptive military reverses suffered during the second half of the 18th century by various Muslim rulers - the Mughals at the hands of the British, the Turks and Persians at the hands of the Russians, the Egyptian Mamluks at the hands of the French and indeed the anti-Ottoman reform programmes of Muhammad Ali and Ismail Pasha in Egypt - produced a further impulse for temporal change. They created a sense that the Arab and Muslim worlds had fallen behind Europe in technological terms. Combined with indigenous modernisation impulses, this led to a period of

critical, erratic but often productive engagement with European thought, largely directed by urban elites, which flourished for well over a century and whose impact is still with us.⁴³ It was further shaped by the French occupation of Algiers in 1830 and the aggressive imperial and colonial policies pursued by most of the major European powers throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, which led to most parts of the Muslim world falling under European control of varying sorts. It aroused interest in the new ways of thinking that seemed to have given Europe such a material advantage and led to attempts at reform on allegedly rational European lines within the Ottoman Empire and in Egypt. In parallel, it also led to a prolonged and intense debate on how best to repel European – by definition infidel – encroachments on Muslim territories and infringements of Islamic practices⁴⁴ and to recover the allegedly lost glory of Islam.

The Conjecture

In due course, criticism by reformist intellectuals of what they saw as Europe's arrogant secularism, moral degeneracy and elevation of instrumental reason above faith⁴⁵ became central to the way in which the ideological challenge was construed within the Arab and wider Islamic worlds. The process by which this happened was complex. Although usually fiercely Islamic and always anti-colonial and anti-imperial, the emerging resistance to this challenge was inevitably framed by contemporary ideas of the secular state and the national community – including the subsequent deformation of authoritarian *Blut und Boden* nationalism into what we have come to call fascism.⁴⁶ This shaped the views of significant numbers not just of Muslims but also Christians, often educated within institutions modelled on European lines. It was influenced often at second- or third-hand by Darwin's and Lamarck's ideas about evolution, the social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer⁴⁷ and the Hegelian historicism developed by Marx, sometimes mapped onto the cyclical account of history given by the great 14th North African scholar, Ibn Khaldun.⁴⁸ It eventually sowed the seeds of what the distinguished French scholar, Olivier Roy, has described as the Islamist "*cultural reappropriation of modernity*,"⁴⁹ with the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the late 1920s, the first organised and ideologically modernist Islamist mass movement, and the template for all subsequent Islamist social mobilisation.⁵⁰ Also shaped by this process were various forms of Arab nationalism and hyper-nationalism, the Leftist and communist movements that emerged particularly in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and South Asia,⁵¹ and indeed a fascinating strain of modernist and postmodernist but not always liberal rationalism, basing itself on earlier Islamic thought but heavily influenced by European social science and philosophy. This runs from Ali Abdel Raziq, *Al Islam wa Usul al Hukm* (*Islam and the Foundations of Political Power*)⁵² in 1925 to the "father of Arab Existentialism", Fouad Zakariyyah,⁵³ the so-called "*turathiyyoun*"⁵⁴ - Hassan Hanafi and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, author of the hermeneutical *Naqd Al-Khitab Al Dini* (*Critique of Religious Discourse*)⁵⁵ in 1990 - the neo-Traditionalists⁵⁶ and the works of Muhammad Arkoun⁵⁷ and Shi'a scholars such as Abdol

Karim Soroush and Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari.⁵⁸

These various trends were in often violent competition.⁵⁹ But at least at the level of elites they shared an array of references, both Islamic and European. And their thought in general, with its emphasis on authenticity (*al-asalah*)⁶⁰ and its frequent suspicion of European notions of sovereignty and the ideal community, was conditioned by a specific material and intellectual context: the association of post-enlightenment Europe with imperialist violence, cultural alienation, apparent loss of religious faith and political oppression and a desire to differentiate the world of “Islam” from the “West”.⁶¹

In addition, from the 1960s onwards, Arab intellectuals on all sides of the political debate sought explanations for the apparent failure of their leaders to confront Israel successfully, reverse Palestinian dispossession, repel the new American or Soviet imperialisms or achieve domestic social and political development in an even wider array of sources, ranging from Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Taimiyyah and a growing body of Salafi and other Islamist exegesis and jurisprudence to Marx, Hannah Arendt and Tocqueville.⁶²

A Hybrid Discourse of Revolt

Characteristic early examples of the Islamist critique of western modernity can be found in the writings of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna,⁶³ and in those of two of his ideological successors, Abul A’la Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb.⁶⁴ Al-Banna was himself at least superficially familiar with certain currents of western thought.⁶⁵ But Mawdudi, followed by Qutb (who seems to have taken much of his central critique of global injustice from him, through the intermediation of Abu’l-Hassan Ali Nadwi,⁶⁶ particularly the ideas of *jahiliyyah* and *hakimiyyah*),⁶⁷ may have been the most significant conduit for the transmission through Sunni Islamists of key elements in European counter- and post-Enlightenment discourse.⁶⁸

There is a further distinctive relationship between Shi’a Islamists, counter-enlightenment thought and an anti-western, anti-capitalist and anti-liberal discourse of revolt.⁶⁹ This may have been a consequence of the expansion and modernisation of higher education under the Pahlavis and the greater willingness of some Shi’a *mujtahids*, including Khomeini (especially after the Revolution) to teach and study something that has come in recent times to be generally discouraged in the Sunni schools, namely “philosophy” - a catch-all term that can cover everything from Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus to medieval Islamic metaphysics, the Mu’tazaliyyah, al-Farabi and al-Ghazzali, Kant, Hegel, Saint-Simon, Comte, Marx, Heidegger and indeed Popper, Foucault and Habermas.⁷⁰ But it also hinges on the use that influential theorists such as Jalal Al-e Ahmad (a former communist) or Ali Shariati (who had studied under the mystically-inclined Catholic orientalist, Louis Massignon, in Paris)⁷¹ made, for example, of such

diverse western thinkers as Marx, Weber, Fanon,⁷² Sartre, Ernst Jünger⁷³ and Heidegger, from whom Ahmad, via his teacher, Ahmad Fardid,⁷⁴ may have adapted the concept of *Gharbzadegeh/ Westoxication*, which became so important for the revolutionaries around Khomeini before and after 1979.⁷⁵

The Iranian revolution of that year, with its skilful blending of Shi'a tropes of suffering, oppression and salvation with Leftist slogans about the millennial revolt of the dispossessed and the need for radical social justice, was in many ways a turning point.⁷⁶ Qaddafi may have revered Castro and Che Guevara.⁷⁷ The PFLP read Marx and Lenin in the camps of the Beqa'a. Jean-Luc Godard believed the global revolution would start among the Palestinian *fida'yeen* in Jordan.⁷⁸ And, the tribal radicals of South Yemen – supported by their fellow-travellers living in the comfort of the Gulf⁷⁹ – may have thought themselves the vanguard of a global proletariat. But it was probably in Iran, under the sponsorship of an organised neo-Jacobin state,⁸⁰ that both Shi'a and Sunni Islamist ideas and radical European thought were first brought into alignment, widely mobilised and forged into a tool of sustained discursive resistance to alleged global injustice, western oppression and orientalist hegemony.⁸¹

The Nature of the Challenge

This discourse, inflected by a mixture of reimagined Islamic and non-Islamic modernist thought, resonates with the European and American Left precisely because it claims to have the same targets.⁸² It mirrors the assault on the construction of the rational Weberian state, the racial and the West developed in different ways in the second half of the 20th century by figures such as Fanon, Foucault and Edward Said. They in turn drew on Freud, Heidegger,⁸³ Benjamin,⁸⁴ Adorno, Horkheimer,⁸⁵ Marcuse,⁸⁶ and other critics of Enlightenment rationality, the bleakness of scientism⁸⁷ and the offences against Being of Anglo-American *Reklamekultur*,⁸⁸ popular democracy, instrumental rationality,⁸⁹ positivism, mass entertainment and Fordism.⁹⁰ The critical theorists of the New Left see tyranny as a discursively encoded function of state power: so do Islamists.⁹¹ Post-colonial scholars welcome the provincialisation of the Western: Islamists, following Spengler, exult in its inevitable decline.⁹² Nietzsche wrote of the death of God, the slave mentality of Christianity, the twilight of the idols – including the state – and the emergence into the light of unillusioned Truth of the *Übermensch*.⁹³ Islamists talk of the nullity of the Christian God, their contempt for His followers, the idolatry of the western state and the necessity of a new and revealed Islamist Truth for suffering humanity.⁹⁴ The notorious German jurist, Carl Schmitt, wrote of political theology and the state of exception that reveals the site of a sovereignty that represents an absent God.⁹⁵ Islamists promote a theologised politics and a sacred exceptionalism that reveals God as uniquely sovereign.⁹⁶ Antonio Gramsci, followed by Marcuse and Louis Althusser, emphasised the overriding importance for the revolutionary struggle of achieving normative

hegemony through language and the ideological apparatuses of the state:⁹⁷ Islamists have learned the lesson. Traditionalists such as the esotericist turned Sufi, René Guénon, saw the western world order in crisis and called for a rediscovery of the spiritual:⁹⁸ so do Islamists.⁹⁹

This relationship began with mutinous colonial subjects searching for weapons to use against the West. It ended with western intellectuals, perhaps attracted by the glamour of insurrection against the existing order and disappointed in a Marxist-Leninism that had so often flattered to deceive, allowing themselves to be seduced by a new revolt of increasingly militant Islamism, which they took to be the ultimate answer to the discredited claims of positivism.¹⁰⁰ It is always more exciting, after all, to be on the metaphorical barricades rather than in the actual (and dusty) archives.

Perhaps the canonical (if the term is permitted in this context) example of this position is Michel Foucault, one of the patron saints of critical theory.¹⁰¹ Foucault visited Tehran twice in 1978 to write a series of articles commissioned by the Italian newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*.¹⁰² Deciphering Iranian dreams (as he put it), he was dazzled by what he saw as the revolt of the subaltern¹⁰³ and the return of a political utopianism which Max Weber¹⁰⁴ thought had faded in the bleak light of the rational, bureaucratic state. He was in many ways an acute observer. But strangely oblivious to the hard realities (as opposed to the discursive analytics) of power, he announced the return of a “political spirituality”: the reversal by Khomeini of the Weberian disenchantment of the world.¹⁰⁵ He proclaimed that the revolution had its own truth, found in a distinctive form of unalienated cognition.¹⁰⁶ A few months later he gushed “*Leur faim, leurs humiliations, leur haine du régime et leur volonté de le renverser, ils les inscrivaient aux confins du ciel et de la terre, dans une histoire rêvée qui était tout autant religieuse que politique.*” (“Their hunger, their humiliations, their hatred for the regime and their willingness to overthrow it – they inscribe all this on the borders of heaven and earth, in a dream of history quite as much religious as political”).¹⁰⁷ It ended in disaster, of course – not least for women (about whom Foucault rarely wrote sympathetically).¹⁰⁸ But Islamists agreed. They still do.¹⁰⁹

Whatever the exact nature of the confluence of contemporary radical western and Islamist thought, it is plain that both grew out of the same milieu:¹¹⁰ the revolt against Enlightenment rationality, Cartesian subjectivity,¹¹¹ Kantian universalism,¹¹² the late 19th century intellectual crisis of western modernity, the shocks of imperialism and mass conflict and (in a different tradition) the translation of Marx’s materialist view of the class struggle in industrial economies to suit the different circumstances (and floating signifiers) of advanced global capitalism. This generated new forms of analytical interest in discursive fields such as “governmentality”,¹¹³ the construction of overlapping racial, ethnic and religious taxonomies,¹¹⁴ the ways in which language itself encodes relationships of power, and

the nature of the post-colonial order.¹¹⁵ In doing so, it generated new intellectual tools with which to advance the quintessentially Gramscian goal of ideological hegemony.

The emergence of a shared discourse has helped Islamists not simply in their efforts to normalise their claims within Muslim communities (something two excellent reports in 2020, one from the French Sénat¹¹⁶ and another for the ECHR¹¹⁷ have discussed at length). It has also enabled them to become embedded within existing non-Muslim discourses of contestation, often adopting the same organisational techniques - cellular structures, vanguardism and, for example, a Popular Front model. A good recent example of this from France is the letter published in *Libération* on 1 November 2019, organized by an array of Islamic/Islamist and Leftist figures and groups,¹¹⁸ and signed also by senior members of the left-wing party, *La France Insoumise*, trades unions, and Leftist academics and journalists. It called for a united front and solidarity against Islamophobia through a demonstration in Paris under a photograph of the slogan – dubious at the time and tone-deaf in the light of what has happened since - *l'islamophobie: le silence tue* (“Islamophobia: Silence Kills”).¹¹⁹ We have seen something similar in Britain with the Stop the War Coalition and the moral support that many on the Left have given to movements such as Hamas and Hizbullah on the basis of their anti-colonialist and anti-globalist pretensions. We see it in their willingness to subordinate women’s rights to the interests of an “anti-imperialist” politics.¹²⁰ We see it too in the fierce opposition by Islamists and otherwise entirely secular Leftist circles to the counter-terrorism policies of successive governments,¹²¹ both Labour and Conservative, on the basis that they reflect the sort of oppressive securitisation of politics and the repressive moulding of dissident subjectivity that Foucault claimed to identify in his work on the disciplinary technologies of power.

While Islamists denounce the West and all its works, they draw on many of its basic categories – including the very idea of a unitary “West” itself.¹²² And this idea of a toxic “West” – which in its arrogant lust for forbidden knowledge destroys the human, the spiritual and then the planet – is familiar from certain forms of progressive/leftist discourse. Perhaps the image that captures this attitude best is Walter Benjamin’s *Engel der Geschichte* – the Angel of History. Unlike Hegel’s *Weltgeist*, benignly guiding humanity under its own steam to the culminating perfection of the Prussian state, Benjamin’s Angel is a horrified exile from Paradise, helplessly borne backwards on the wings of a secular storm, which brings only destruction in its wake. Benjamin concludes, “That, which we call progress, is this storm.”¹²³

Islamists accept that the Leftist critique of western modernity is just: indeed they often claim that Islam anticipated and contains it all already.¹²⁴ But it is not sufficient on its own. And that is a difficulty. Nietzsche, Heidegger, Fanon, Foucault, Said and the Frankfurt Schoolers represent an immanent

critique of western modernity within a specific historical context and in a chain of thought that can be traced back through the materialism of Marx, the transcendental historicism of Hegel and the anti-Cartesianism of Kant to the Pre-Socratic philosophers of classical Greece.¹²⁵ Islamists have adapted the critique to support their different purposes within an entirely different tradition, whose chains of authentication stretch back not to the radical scepticism of Heraclitus or Empedocles, but into the mists of divine revelation.

At the heart of this difference is the question of the sacred. Western modernist and postmodernist thought rejects both God and Revelation as appropriate subjects for the public sphere.¹²⁶ Even Heidegger, who trained as a theologian and briefly as a Jesuit, preferred to concentrate on the phenomenology of this world, what the late George Steiner called a “post-theology”,¹²⁷ seeing death as the ultimate affirmation of Being, not a step into transcendence. Nietzsche’s “*unbekannter Gott*” (“Unknown God”)¹²⁸ is Dionysus, not an Abrahamic *Deus Absconditus* (Hidden God).¹²⁹ Post-modernists – like Islamists – textualise reality.¹³⁰ But unlike them, in the absence of God they aestheticise politics and relativise ethics.¹³¹ In response to this, some seek meaning in a renewed application of disinterested reason¹³² or a classical tradition of virtue.¹³³ Others seek a foundational form of quasi-gnostic knowledge within deep structures of thought and discourse. In doing so they seek to uncover not the divine but a(n in)human will to power – without then knowing what to do other than be ironic. Islamists in contrast, though they will talk easily about “structural Islamophobia”,¹³⁴ are not structuralists at all. They are also wholly unironic. They believe themselves to be prophetically inspired and fuelled not by radical doubt, but by absolute conviction. Nietzsche sought to fill the moral vacuum created by the death of God with the “all-too-human”. For Islamists, submission to an unquestioned if unknowable divinity serves the same purpose.¹³⁵

And this is a major problem. Post-modernists, critical theorists and Islamists may share “a globalised frame of reference and an exaggerated sense of crisis; an ambiguous...relationship to modernity ...a selective reappropriation of the past, a mixing of high and low cultures and a dismissal of the need for any justificatory metadiscourse.”¹³⁶ But the postmodern western Left’s critique of enlightenment rationality and its allegedly oppressive and alienating application by a panopticon state is associated with “a radical suspicion of foundationalism and of all notions of truth”.¹³⁷ Central to Islamism is “an antihermeneutic embrace of absolute foundations”. The former sees social order as produced and guaranteed materially: the latter by “a reified form of islam”.¹³⁸

Each position brings its own challenges. The former can corrode the foundations not simply of an epistemic but also of a social and political order in pursuit of a secular utopia without coordinates. The latter can seek to impose a theocratic epistemological tyranny akin to the Anabaptists

of Münster.¹³⁹ When the two projects are combined in an assault upon liberal democracy, we risk the destruction of everything valuable in the Enlightenment legacy. This I take to mean the way in which we choose to live and construe ourselves, including free and independent thought, a tolerant and reasoned understanding of complexity, and the tools to change any or all of this for the better by rational public debate, and democratic consent rather than by epistemic rupture.¹⁴⁰

The liberal order is undoubtedly imperfect. It may well not be helpful to talk of “*Islamogauchisme*”, without defining exactly what and who is meant. And the Enlightenment and its consequences are not immune from criticism: they never have been. But neither Islamism nor critical theorists have a persuasive remedy for their imperfections. They call for the replacement of the existing order and the erasure of its monuments and memory. Neither brooks dissent. Each has a quasi-Calvinist belief in ‘election’. Separate, they are disturbing. Combined they are destructive.

In 1962, that dark prophet, Carl Schmitt, delivered two lectures on *Die Theorie des Partisanen – The Theory of the Partisan*.¹⁴¹ He identified the emergence of ideologically-rooted revolutionary conflict within states as a decisive trend of the age, heralding the end of Europe’s 300-year old political and jurisprudential imperium and the replacement of conflict between nations by conflict within. He concluded the final lecture by saying, “The theory of the partisan flows into the question of the concept of the political, into the question of the real enemy and of a new *nomos* of the earth.” He drew, of course, on personal experience of two world wars and his own shameful role in a catastrophically partisan episode in German history. That may have given him a certain clarity – like Oedipus at Colonus. He foresaw the radically unmoored communitarianism of Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, Hamas and Hizbullah and the unravelling of the Arab state order. He knew only too well how an ideological assault on the very symbols that make it possible for others collectively to imagine a polymorphous but rooted national political community could make it impossible for such a community to be imagined anywhere. Its replacement would need no history, no memory and no physical location, simply a scripture, a sense of absolute virtue and belief in historical inevitability. It would reject the classic liberal position where rights belong to individuals who are equal before the law in favour of a shift to identity-essentialist groups which make untestable claims about unchangeable hierarchies of worth and reject forms of social order associated with an illegitimate *ancien régime*.¹⁴² This is a model Islamist groups have followed from the beginning. And we now see it spread into the mainstream through the emergence of various often hostile forms of mutually exclusive social pluralism. In the words of Jürgen Habermas, this represents a postmodern revolt against modernity, a “counter-Enlightenment in the garb of post-Enlightenment”.¹⁴³ Whatever else may divide them, that is precisely what Islamism and the self-styled progressive and postmodern Left share.

There is one final point. In a basic sense, class can be measured – for example, through occupation, income and education. Perhaps more importantly, it can be transcended through social mobility and the transitions mapped. More essentialist forms of identity can only be asserted. And they remain static and determinist: if you are “White” you are always “White”, and in turn privileged, racist and oppressive. It is impossible to change, only to repent. If you are “Black” or “Muslim” you are always “Black” or “Muslim” and by definition oppressed by “Whiteness” or a “West” which has turned instrumental reason into a tool of global dominance.¹⁴⁴ There can be no closure, only perpetual resistance. And this resistance is fundamentally epistemic – a war on the way in which we understand the world.¹⁴⁵ That is why for those who reject the Hegelian construction of subjectivity, social identity, dominance and submission through the purposeful gaze of others,¹⁴⁶ auto-ethnography – the assertion of a self-reflexive identity that envelops the world and rejects external interrogation or subjection – is so important. The Islamist construction of an essentialist “Islamic” identity is a characteristic example of this manoeuvre. And it chimes with the wider identitarian obsession of the modern Left. This is precisely where critical theory intersects with Islamism.

You can see the results in the apparently paradoxical way many so-called progressives engage sympathetically with reactionary Islamist positions (for example on questions relating to alleged blasphemy, gender inequality or the veil).¹⁴⁷ You can see it perhaps in shared attitudes towards Israel, Zionism and Jews in general, as emblems of a deranging capitalist modernity.¹⁴⁸ You can also see them in the way the tropes of critical theory are adopted to assert the ontological separateness of “the Islamicate” and therefore the illegitimacy (or at best inadequacy) of any “non-Islamicate” study of the field.¹⁴⁹ The message is clear: questions relating to Islam and Islamism are out of bounds to non-Muslims, non-Islamists and their allies. That way madness lies.¹⁵⁰

We may have thought that the partisan fragmentation of national political communities would always happen somewhere else and we would in any case know how to repair any damage. We were wrong on both counts. Instead, the Enlightenment that produced the modern, individualist and instrumentally rational West, with its systems of private, political and legal liberties,¹⁵¹ also furnished a manual for its ideological detonation.

Both Islamists and the Left essentialise the “West”. They use the same tropes to predict – and welcome – its destruction.¹⁵² Like Schmitt, they deal in a theology of exclusion. In the end you can call this what you like. After all they have been through in recent years, the French are surely right to be worried. As should everyone who cares about the future of liberal and pluralist societies.¹⁵³

Britain and the Islamists

The first essay in this series took the current controversy about Islamo-Gauchisme in France as a starting point to explore the counter-enlightenment and post-modern genealogies of what on the face of it seems an unlikely alliance between Islamists and the radical Left. Could the same thing happen in Britain?

It not only could: it has. In 2001, prominent figures from both the Muslim Brotherhood and the Socialist Workers Party came together in the Stop the War Coalition in opposition to western military intervention in the Middle East.¹⁵⁴ This may at the time have seemed an unlikely alliance of convenience. But in the two decades since the first demonstrations, it has become clear that it is rather more than that. The emergence of the Respect Party, particularly during its period under the leadership of Salma Yaqoob, was a political straw in the wind. Another was the provocative decision by the then Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, to host the Muslim Brotherhood's spiritual figurehead, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. Qaradawi was subsequently banned by the government from re-entering the UK in 2008 because of his support for suicide bombings targeting civilians¹⁵⁵—a decision to which the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) objected.¹⁵⁶

There were other indications of an emergent realignment on the British Left. During the 2006 demonstrations in London against Israel's war in Lebanon, banners were displayed at Stop the War Coalition protests proclaiming: *"We are all Hizbullah now"*.¹⁵⁷ At a 2008 rally addressed by Jeremy Corbyn, another speaker, Azzam al-Tamimi, was greeted with enthusiastic acclaim when he told those gathered in Trafalgar Square; *"If they deny you life, explode in their faces! There will be Jihad, Jihad, and Jihad until Palestine is free. As-salamu alaykum."*¹⁵⁸

Corbyn had, of course, helped to found the Stop the War Coalition. Through the Finsbury Park Mosque in his own north London constituency, he had developed ties with leading figures in the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB). During a 2009 meeting in Parliament, he boasted of extending invitations to "our friends" in Hamas and Hizbullah. It appears that in 2014 he took part in a wreath laying ceremony in Tunis at the graves of members of Black September, a Palestinian group implicated in the 1972 Munich massacre (and many other atrocities). Corbyn has claimed that he was only present for this, and that he did not "think" that he was "involved".¹⁵⁹ These and other problematic associations came back to

haunt him in public. But he never convincingly repudiated them. And these long-standing connections seem to have been reflected in significant Islamist support for Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party, and the emergence of Islamist-linked activists within Momentum and on the Left of the party.

Since Corbyn's replacement by Keir Starmer the alignment of the radical Left in Britain with Islamist causes has shown no signs of weakening. Indeed in certain respects it is more pronounced than ever; for example, in the sustained assault on the Government's counter-radicalisation Prevent programme and the increasing prominence given to claims of widespread structural Islamophobia. Many of those involved in campaigning on these issues claim that both Prevent and the so-called 'securitisation' of Muslims are simply different expressions of the same Islamophobic pathology. With the withdrawal of British troops from most theatres of conflict in the Middle East, they also serve as convenient and infinitely replicable motors of mobilisation, this time with a focus not on the actions of the British state externally but on claims about its malign dysfunctionality at home. This polarising meta-narrative is now widespread in the mainstream and social media, the academy, the cultural sector and other arenas.

Following the introduction of legislation by David Cameron's Government that put Prevent on a statutory footing, the Islamist-aligned campaign groups CAGE and MEND, and the Stand Up To Racism network, allegedly linked to the Socialist Workers Party,¹⁶⁰ formed a particularly close alliance. Throughout 2016 and 2017, individuals such as CAGE's Moazzam Begg—a former Guantanamo inmate—and Azad Ali, Sahar Al-Faifi, and Dr Siema Iqbal, all at the time representing MEND, spoke at Stand Up To Racism events across the country.¹⁶¹ Some of these events were attended by prominent Labour figures such as Diane Abbott and Jeremy Corbyn.¹⁶² In January 2017, MEND and Stand Up To Racism jointly published the pamphlet *Prevent: why we should dissent*, which included among its contributors Azad Ali, Heena Khaled, Michael Mansfield QC, and several prominent figures from student and teaching unions.¹⁶³

Later that year, in July 2017, the Socialist Workers Party held a four day conference, *Marxism 2017*, which featured one panel on Islamophobia and women, and another titled *Challenging Prevent and Islamophobia*.¹⁶⁴ The latter included Azad Ali and Siema Iqbal representing MEND, Moazzam Begg from CAGE, Ameen Hadi of UNISON, and was chaired by Nahella Ashraf,¹⁶⁵ a prominent Stand Up To Racism and SWP activist who had previously stood as a candidate for the Respect Party.¹⁶⁶ Azad Ali claimed that Prevent had institutionalised Islamophobia, and suggested negotiation as an alternative policy for dealing with terrorism. Pointing to the Good Friday Agreement, Ali spoke of the need to "negotiate a political issue," arguing that "terrorism is by and large a political issue," that those "carrying it out have some political issues," and claiming therefore that, "you need to deal with it on a political

level.”

More recently, the subject of media representation of Muslims, and allegations of Islamophobia in the mainstream press have become points of convergence for both Far Left and Islamist activists. The media and journalism Byline Festivals of 2017, 2018, and 2019 not only gave prominence to groups like Extinction Rebellion, but also included sessions featuring representatives from CAGE, MEND, and the MCB, with some of these sessions sponsored by, and organised in direct collaboration with MEND.¹⁶⁷ In 2018, festival goers could enjoy events with titles such as, “Monsterring Muslims in the Media,” or “Lies, Damned Lies, and Headlines About Muslims – Challenging Islamophobia in the Press.”¹⁶⁸

Similarly, in 2020 when the Far-Left Media Reform Coalition held its Media Democracy Festival conference, the programme included a session titled “Media, race and religion: silences and scapegoats” featuring Rizwana Hamid, Director of the MCB’s Centre for Media Monitoring (CFMM), and Narzanin Massoumi, an academic who has written extensively on Islamophobia.¹⁶⁹

Rizwana Hamid is also on the advisory committee of Truth Defence, a relatively recent campaign group which has sought to challenge the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s ruling that under Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership the Labour Party breached equalities law over antisemitism in the party.¹⁷⁰ Massoumi’s 2017 book, *What is Islamophobia? Racism, Social Movements, and the State* was published by the radical publishing house Pluto Press and co-edited with David Miller and Tom Mills¹⁷¹—both academics identifiably on the Left. Like Miller, Massoumi has been a speaker for the Iranian-linked Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC). She appeared at the IHRC’s 2016 Islamophobia conference “*The Environment of Hate and the Police State*,” and was listed as a speaker at their December 2019 conference, “*Islamophobia and Shrinking Civil Society Spaces*.”¹⁷² The IHRC has consistently served as an important intersecting point for radical Left and Islamist anti-western activism. The group’s annual Al-Quds Day rallies in London — notorious for the open display of Hizbullah flags — have drawn particular public attention and been addressed by such prominent left-wing figures as John Rees, George Galloway, and Jeremy Corbyn.¹⁷³

Among the IHRC’s leadership, the group’s co-founder and head of research, Arzu Merali, is also notable for her involvement with post-colonial or decolonial activism. In 2018, Merali was the author of a “Counter-Islamophobia toolkit”, co-funded by the European Union’s Rights, Equality, and Citizenship Programme.¹⁷⁴ In that document she wrote of the “adoption by parts of the academy of the need for decolonised curricula” as a major step forward, and detailed initiatives such as “Why is my curriculum White?”, “Why isn’t my professor Black?”, “#RhodesMustFall”, and the beginnings of a process of “‘decolonisation’ of the English syllabus” at the University of Cambridge.

As well as sitting on the editorial board of the “Decolonising the Mind” book series,¹⁷⁵ in December 2019 Merali chaired an IHRC event with her fellow editorial board member Sandew Hira, also the co-director of the Decolonial International Network. The event, titled “Decolonising Ecology” reportedly featured a “decolonial analysis of Extinction Rebellion,” criticising that movement’s “Eurocentric values”.¹⁷⁶ In the IHRC’s account of that event the “westernised Left” is criticised for merely being anti-capitalist, when apparently what is required is to “decolonise from the Eurocentric views that are informing the production of technology,” and to “decolonise from Cartesian dualism” through “radical transformation of the system.” Modernity itself is a project “of death and destruction of life and earth,” and capitalism exists as a “colonial and civilisational project” that is destructive of “communities and human beings.”

One decolonial group in which both the IHRC and Arzu Merali were initially involved is the Malcolm X Movement (MXM) — described by one of its founders as “building towards a new wave of Global South decolonial anti-imperialist resistance in Britain.”¹⁷⁷ More recently, the group was involved with organising some of the Black Lives Matter-associated demonstrations that took place in London in June 2020, using social media to promote and celebrate incidents of violence that occurred during those events.¹⁷⁸

In 2015 Merali had been a speaker at one of the MXM’s first events: the Malcolm X Film Festival, which was held across seven cities in the UK.¹⁷⁹ The advertising for the festival featured the IHRC logo along with those of groups such as the Respect Party, and the Islamist-aligned news website 5Pillars. More notably, the festival was also officially endorsed by the PFLP, and one of the listed speakers was the PFLP and Black September plane hijacker Leila Khaled.¹⁸⁰ Other speakers advertised included a representative of the Communist Workers Peasants Party of Pakistan, representatives of ZANU-PF, convicted IRA terrorism offender Gerry MacLochlainn, Malia Bouattia of NUS Black Students, and Moussa Ibrahim—former Information Minister and spokesman for Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi. The following year, the MXM was also listed as a supporting organisation for the IHRC’s 2016 Islamophobia conference.¹⁸¹

In 2014, ahead of the MXM’s official launch, the group held an event titled, “Strike the Empire Back: legacies and examples of liberation from neo-colonialism and white supremacy.”¹⁸² It was announced that the event had been co-sponsored by the IHRC, with Arzu Merali being listed as a speaker representing both the IHRC and also the Malcolm X Movement.¹⁸³ During her remarks, Merali told listeners, “We know who the enemy is; we know that it’s the west, it’s the NATO countries.” It was also the “white supremacist structure, or liberal structure”. Merali emphasised the significance of the Islamic revolution in Iran—stressing that there was an “important distinction to be made between the Iranian revolution and the Islamic revolution”—but explaining that there were lessons to learn there about how “ideology operates” and the “types of ideologies we want to be working with.” Hizbullaha, she added, was another example. While Merali stated that

she was not going to “lionise” Iran’s Islamic revolution, nevertheless, she argued that it was still “one of the most successful events — a proper revolution — in the last 30-40 years that we’ve had, and we are still having a vibrant legacy from that.”

Another panellist at the event, Carlos Martinez who writes for the *Morning Star*, also spoke of the importance of ideology, pointing to how Sinn Féin and the IRA had “managed to fight the British state to a standstill, to a stalemate,” before adding “yeh, I wish we could fight the British state to a stalemate”. Similarly, referring to the Iranian revolution, Martinez outlined the significance of that ideology; “which was about radical Islam, orientation towards the poor, anti-imperialism, anti-Zionism.” The same could be said, Martinez argued, of a group like “Hezbollah; the Lebanese resistance organisation,” which “for the record” he remarked, “is the only fighting force in the world to have defeated Israel on the battlefield”. As well as mentioning past revolutions in Grenada, Cuba, China, and Russia, Martinez stated that “there’s a lot be said at this particular point in time” to looking towards Latin America, to the legacy of Hugo Chavez, as well as that of Qaddafi.

The Uses and Abuses of Critical Theory Discourse

Increasingly, it is as much in the adoption of a certain kind of discourse as in actual political organising that the extent of this emerging Left-Islamist alignment has become visible. A network of academics and community activists seem to be in the process of forming a hybrid ideology. Incorporating a particularly confrontational form of community-based identity politics, it remains as Islamist at its core as it is post-modern and post-colonial in its outer trappings.

Examples can readily be found in the pages of works such as the recent anthology *I Refuse to Condemn: resisting racism in times of national security*, edited by Asim Qureshi of the Islamist group CAGE, but published by the University of Manchester Press.¹⁸⁴ As Fahad Ansari, one of the anthology’s contributors, put it during an interview following the publication of the book: “the greatest challenge is resisting the performative act of condemning atrocities with which we have no connection save for the perpetrators identifying with the same religion as us.”¹⁸⁵ That interview appeared in an article in the *Metro* revealingly titled, “How Muslims are challenging Islamophobia by refusing to condemn terrorism”.

References to the “performative”, and to “performativity” are widespread both in that anthology and elsewhere in the milieu to which its authors belong. It is a term closely associated in the Anglosphere with the American feminist and queer theorist, Judith Butler, who has claimed that gender is simply a performative phenomenon. But it has a wider history elsewhere, in the writings, for example, of Jean Francois-Lyotard and Jacques Derrida. Islamists and their allies have used it to claim that the alienation of Muslims in the West arises at least in part from the way in which Islamophobic structures and discourses compel them to perform a range of inauthentic behaviours. At other times it is used to stigmatise the

way in which the western state disguises its allegedly essential hostility to Muslims and other minorities; evidence, for example, that the Prevent scheme addresses all violent ideologies and not exclusively or specifically Muslims, is often dismissed as “performative”.

While the adoption of such language by Islamist-aligned academics and commentators is striking, perhaps equally remarkable is the way in which critical-theory-infused claims have found their way into documents such as the 2018 report by All-Party-Parliamentary-Group on British Muslims on the definition of Islamophobia. That report spoke of the “intersectional nature of Islamophobia”, “gendered Islamophobia”, “micro-aggressions”, “lived experience”, the existence of a “binary narrative” about Muslims in the media, the “problematization” of “Muslimness”, and the “racialisation” and “othering” involved in representations of Islam. The report highlighted evidence from Akeela Ahmed—chair of the Independent Members of the Cross-Government Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group, which sits within MHCLG. According to the report, Ahmed emphasised the “structural nature of Islamophobia”, which allegedly concerns “every aspect of a British Muslim person’s life”.¹⁸⁶

In March this year the MCB released its own report on the APPG’s efforts, which displays an equally practised facility with the vocabulary of critical race theory. It refers to the “categorical othering of Muslims in Britain” and the “normalisation of Islamophobic discourse”, claiming that “individuals may face a multitude of oppressions that overlap”, so “necessitating an intersectional approach when considering whether someone has been subject to Islamophobia”. At one point the report argues that, “defining and seeing Islamophobia only or primarily through the prism of religion” is “particularly problematic (or functional) in so-called secular societies, where criticism of religion is considered a healthy and necessary practice, based on narrow conceptions of freedom of speech, often ignoring power relationships.” It claims that “allegedly progressive discourses” that express concern over illiberal practices in certain forms of Islam, are themselves illiberal. They are instead “examples of ‘neo-racism’ or ‘cultural racism’ and reproduce Orientalist colonial ones, where the separation between the white European - and Christian - west and its racialised other is clear.”¹⁸⁷

The discourse is reflected in other statements the MCB has issued. Condemning the March 2021 report by the Government-appointed Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, for example, an MCB spokesperson claimed that the authors of the report were writing off the “structures of institutional racism”, and that doing so was serving no one, other than those “who want to deny that racism is a problem.”¹⁸⁸

As we have already seen, conferences and public events have long offered convening opportunities for left-leaning and Muslim activist academics as well as Islamists. Such gatherings have increasingly showcased a hybrid discourse of critical theory and Islamism. In March 2021, the Centre for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA) at Istanbul’s Zaim University held its third international conference on Islamophobia. This year the conference’s co-

sponsors included the UK-based group CAGE, as well as the Coalition for Civil Freedoms from the United States. Represented among the conference speakers were Chafika Attalai, a member of the now dissolved Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF), David Miller of the University of Bristol, and Farid Hafez¹⁸⁹ of Salzburg University and Georgetown University's Bridge Initiative—who has described himself as “a critical scholar analysing racism, speaking truth to power and representing the marginalised”.¹⁹⁰

The conference took as its focus the “War on Terror”, which provided participants with ample opportunity for attacking the UK's counter-extremism and counter-terrorism policies. What is particularly striking is the way in which the event's organisers framed their conference in the language of post-colonial critical theory.¹⁹¹ The CIGA website explains that the conference has now “moved past theorizing Islamophobia simply as an individual or communal religious prejudice,” but rather argues that in light of “fading American power”, Islamophobia should be understood “against a backdrop of global racial hierarchy which is again trying to impose a future world order.”

CIGA further claimed that, “policies of socio-political nature are often used to cover what are realist power objectives”, arguing that “free-trade became an excuse by colonial powers to peddle drugs and destruction into China”, just as in the contemporary United States the “War on Drugs” has led to the “mass incarceration of African Americans for the past four decades.” According to CIGA, these are examples of how policies “coded in the language of moral certitude result in consequences that allocate its benefits and burdens unequally among the ruled.” Therefore, the conference “isolates the Global War on Terror” which masquerades “as an international policy in the name of security and peace,” while really disguising “an institutional language of animosity against and hegemony over Muslims and other disfavored communities worldwide.”

A notable speaker at CIGA's previous two international conferences on Islamophobia was Salman Sayyid, Chair in Social Theory and Decolonial Thought at the University of Leeds.¹⁹² Sayyid appears as a particularly significant connecting point here: it was Sayyid's formulation that served as the basis for the definition of Islamophobia proposed by the APPG on British Muslims. Sayyid also co-authored the foreword for the MCB's subsequent report on that definition.¹⁹³ In the past, Sayyid has appeared as a speaker for the Islamic Human Rights Commission on a number of occasions,¹⁹⁴ and more recently is identified as the keynote speaker at an upcoming conference being held by the Alwaleed Centre at the University of Edinburgh which appears to parallel the conference held by CIGA. Titled, “The Study of Islam and Muslims in the shadow of the ‘War on Terror’: Complexity, Reflexivity and Decolonising Methodologies”, the conference scheduled for June 2021 includes speakers like CAGE's Asim Qureshi, and a number of others who have previously spoken at CIGA's Islamophobia conferences, such as Khadijah Elshayyal, who is listed as representing both Hamid Bin Khalifa University in Qatar, and the University of Edinburgh.¹⁹⁵

Adopting the unmistakably post-modern discourse of critical theory, the organisers of the conference claim that, “the ‘War on Terror’ has reinvigorated Orientalist constructions of Muslims, to which academic knowledge production contributed”, and that “depending on their positionalities”, researchers will confront both “securitisation” of Muslim communities, and “Orientalist approaches” as key dynamics shaping the “production of knowledge on Islam/Muslims.” They also argue that despite the “political securitisation of Islam,” there has also been an “upsurge in numbers of researchers who attempt to bring agency to Muslim voices and validate Islamic worldviews and epistemologies.”

Ultimately, the conference describes itself as exploring how the movement to Decolonise the Curriculum in British universities could enable academic staff to “tackle and transcend the aforementioned dynamics present in the study of Muslims and Islam within any discipline in the Humanities and Social Sciences.” The conference programme includes sessions such as: “The Myth of ‘Salafi-Jihadism’, A Critique of the Western-centric Narrative”, “Navigating ‘Islam’ in the Academy: Decoloniality, Muslim Subjectivity, and the Limitations of a Category”, “Decolonializing ‘Introduction to Islam’ Pedagogy: Reversing the Gaze and Cultivating Intersectionality”, “Decolonising Muslim Men: Subverting Grand Structures”.

Salman Sayyid is also involved in organising¹⁹⁶ a forthcoming event titled, “Reorienting the Post-Western: 1st International Conference on Critical Muslim Studies”, to mark five years since the launch of ReOrient, the journal of Critical Muslim Studies which is published by Pluto Journals, a partner of Pluto Press.¹⁹⁷ The Critical Muslim Studies conference, which is to be hosted by the Centre for Ethnic and Racism Studies at the University of Leeds, states that it will be concerned with the “Western paradigm of knowledge production about what are deemed to be non-Western societies, histories and cultures.” It is claimed that there has been a disparity of efforts among “scholars grappling in different fields against the impasses of positivism, presentism and the entrenchment of disciplines in epistemic cages forged as part of Europe’s worldmaking,” and accordingly this conference seeks to bring together scholarship that “recognises the imperative for epistemic decolonising and decolonisation.”

So far, there has been a call for papers on subjects such as “White Supremacy and Its Enemies”, “Anti-Colonial Struggles And Islamicate Mobilisations”, “Race And Eurocentrism”, “South-South Solidarities And Insurgencies”, “Gender Justice And Decolonial Intersectionalities.” These align well with Critical Muslim Studies and its journal. As the editorial board state in their manifesto, ReOrient encapsulates a “turning away from an Orientalizing gaze”, as part of a “family of concepts and critiques associated with decolonial thinking and its call for delinking from the Western episteme.” Lest there be any confusion, it is made quite apparent that Critical Muslim Studies is not so much concerned with critiquing Islamic thought or the Muslim world, with the manifesto commenting on the prevalence of “Muslim self-criticism,” stating that this is an “element of critique which, however intended, insidiously aligns with dominant inscriptions of the Muslim problem and the crisis of Islam.”

Rather, we are told that there is an embrace of “decolonial thinking,” which calls for “epistemic delinking as the means of delivering on the promise of critical theory in contexts where the dispossessed are not represented by the ‘translation of the proletariat’.” This then is a project that, “places at its heart the ‘wretched of the Earth’ and follows the consequences of this placement for an understanding of the emergence of the current world order and investigations of obstacles to its replacement.” A particular focus for challenge is “Eurocentrism,” which is described as a “project that persistently seeks to articulate the universal as the synonym of Europeaness” and as such “precludes the possibility of Muslim agency” and “forecloses the venture of Critical Muslim Studies.” The editorial board claims that through the critique of Orientalism there “opens the possibility of enquires that understand the complex constitutive interplay between power and knowledge. The project “signals a shift from the ontic towards a more ontological inclined understanding of matters Islamicate.” Critical Muslim Studies we are told “is informed by an ongoing (but not necessarily consummated) suspicion of positivism,” and that for Critical Muslim Studies, “there is no necessary comfort in having ‘the facts and data’.”

And here we have it. By rejecting Eurocentrism, the oppressed of the earth, assisted by the midwives of Islamist identitarianism, are supposed at last to find their authentic voice, which will enable them to level against their opponents the usual data- and fact-free accusations of essentialist prejudice and the damnable misuse of power. Some achievement. Whose interests does it serve?

Endnotes

- 1 Jules Darmanin, French minister wants inquiry into so-called Islamo-leftist bias in academia, 17 February 2021. <https://www.politico.eu/article/french-minister-wants-inquiry-into-so-called-islamo-leftist-bias-in-academia/>
- 2 Janet Afary and Kevin Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, Chicago 2005, Epilogue offer a useful discussion of the way in which luminaries of the Left such as Noam Chomsky, Jean Baudrillard and others saw the events of 9/11 through the prism of a Leftist anti-imperialist discourse while entirely failing to grasp the reactionary ambitions of the perpetrators.
- 3 See Gilles Kepel, *The Murder of Samuel Paty*, Liberties, Spring 2021.
- 4 See Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, New York University Press 2017. Pamela Paresky, *Critical Race Theory and the “Hyper White” Jew*, Sapir, Spring 2021 at <https://sapijournal.org/social-justice/2021/05/critical-race-theory-and-the-hyper-white-jew/> is a worked example of what this means in practice. There are, of course, many more.
- 5 Nicola Woolcock and Steven Swinford, New laws to protect university free speech, 12 May 2021. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/new-laws-to-protect-university-free-speech-r6xstz8qs>
- 6 The excellent recent report by the French National Assembly in March 2021 on the emergence and evolution of various forms of racism and what responses might be made (at https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/rapports/racisme/l15b3969-ti_rapport-information.pdf) is another model.
- 7 See in general Aziz al Azmeh, *l’obscurantisme postmoderne et la question musulmane*, Arles, 2004 ; Aziz al Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities*, Verso, London 2009
- 8 Following a similar claim by the Education Minister, Jean-Michel Blanquer, in October 2020.
- 9 “An interdisciplinary public research organisation under the administrative supervision of the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research”: <https://www.cnrs.fr/en/cnrs>
- 10 See Henry Samuel, French minister sparks storm over warning of ‘Islamist-Leftist’ scourge in universities, *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 February 2021 at <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/02/17/french-minister-sparks-storm-warning-islamo-leftist-scourge/> and, for example, the lively debates, *Le parti pris* de Caroline Fourest : islamisme-gauchisme, quelle réalité? LCI, 23 February 2021 at <https://>

www.lci.fr/societe/video-le-parti-pris-de-caroline-fourest-islamo-gauchisme-quelle-realite-2179133.html and Bernard Lugan répond aux décoloniaux, aux islamo-gauchistes et aux terroristes de la repentance, Sud Radio, 25 March 2021 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wEHfMUmRkw>. Fourest is a self-declared Leftist: Lugan the reverse.

- 11 “Islamism-leftism” is not a scientific reality, CNRS 21 February 2021 at <http://www.cnrs.fr/en/node/5559>. What exactly a “scientific reality” means in this context and who is qualified to make that judgement is hard to say, of course.
- 12 For example, «Islamism-gauchisme»: Vidal provoque la consternation chez les chercheurs, MediaPart, 17 February 2021 at <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/170221/islamo-gauchisme-vidal-provoque-la-consternation-chez-les-chercheurs?onglet=full>, Chloé Benoist, France: What is the ‘Islamism-leftism’ debate really about?, Middle East Eye, 5 March 2021 at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/france-islam-leftism-macron-muslims-academia-elections> or Bernadette Sauvaget and Simon Blin, «Islamism-gauchisme»: Frédérique Vidal perd ses facultés, Libération, 17 February 2021 at https://www.liberation.fr/idees-et-debats/islamo-gauchisme-frederique-vidal-perd-ses-facultes-20210217_7TOKDM2M2FE6DLH5RULC2D55T4/. Mujtaba Rahman, On Islam, Macron isn’t flirting with the far right, Politico-EU, 25 February 2021 at <https://www.politico.eu/article/on-islam-macron-isnt-flirting-with-the-far-right/> is less heated and more nuanced.
- 13 Rafik Chekkat, France. Class Struggle vs. Identity Struggles? Orient XXI, 16 March 2021 at <https://orientxxi.info/lu-vu-entendu/class-struggle-vs-identity-struggles,4600>.
- 14 And indeed is said to echo the claims of the French Right in the first half of the 20th century that there was a conspiracy between Jews and Freemasons (“l’emprise judaéo-maçonnique” as an infamous headline from the Vichy newspaper, Le Soir, in 1941, had it) or with the communists – the equally infamous Judaeo-Bolshevism of the Nazis: see Paul Hanebrink, A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judaeo-Bolshevism, Harvard, 2018, Muriam Haleh Davis, Racial Capitalism and the Campaign against ‘Islamism-gauchisme’ in France, Jadaliyya, 14 August 2018 at <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/37858/Racial-Capitalism-and-the-Campaign-Against-“Islamism-Gauchisme”-in-France>, LCI 2021 and Pascal Bruckner, Un Racisme Imaginaire: Islamisme et Culpabilité, Grasset, 2017. The Wall Street Journal at least thinks the French government is on to something: see Emmanuel Macron and the Woke, WSJ, 17 February 2012 at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/emmanuel-macron-and-the-woke-11613604823>. So apparently do a majority of the French themselves: see the poll reported in Les Français et la notion d’Islamism-gauchisme, IFOP 19 February 2021 at <https://www.ifop.com/publication/les-francais-et-la-notion-dislamism-gauchisme/>. The open letter organised by

- Azeeza Kanji, David Palumbo-Liu and Paola Bacchetta, In solidarity with French academics targeted by the republic, Al Jazeera, 12 April 2021 at <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/4/12/in-solidarity-with-french-academics-targeted-by-the-republic> makes all the usual hostile arguments and more, most of them not germane to what the French government has said it is trying to achieve. They claim that much of critical theory originated outside the Anglo-American or European academies. The signatories are overwhelmingly from the Anglo-American and European academies.
- 15 See Islamo-gauchisme – what does it mean and why is it controversial in France?, The Local, 17 February 2021 at <https://www.thelocal.fr/20210217/islamogauchisme-what-does-it-mean-and-why-is-it-controversial-in-france/>.
 - 16 Mille et une Nuits, 2002. See also his L'imposture Décoloniale: Science imaginaire et Pseudo-Antiracisme, Paris 2020.
 - 17 Jean Birnbaum, Un silence religieux: la gauche face au djihadisme, Seuil, 2016
 - 18 Finkelkraut et «le mouvement islamogauchiste», Le Monde, 13 June 2010 at https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2010/06/13/finkelkraut-et-le-mouvement-islamogauchiste_1372087_3224.html.
 - 19 Un racisme imaginaire: la querelle de l'islamophobie, Paris 2017: see especially Chapter 4, L'islamogauchisme ou la conjonction des ressentiments
 - 20 See Eugénie Bastié, L'universitaire Gilles Kepel ravive la fracture à gauche sur l'islam, Le Figaro, 8 November 2016 at <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2016/11/08/01016-20161108ARTFIG00271-l-universitaire-gilles-kepel-ravive-la-fracture-a-gauche-sur-l-islam.php>, Various signatories, Une centaine d'universitaires alertent : « Sur l'islamisme, ce qui nous menace, c'est la persistance du déni ». Le Monde, 31 October 2020 at https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/10/31/une-centaine-d-universitaires-alertent-sur-l-islamisme-ce-qui-nous-menace-c-est-la-persistance-du-deni_6057989_3232.html and « Le problème n'est pas tant l'islamogauchisme » que le dévoiement militant de l'enseignement et de la recherche », Le Monde, 22 February 2021 at https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/02/22/universites-le-probleme-n-est-pas-tant-l-islamogauchisme-que-le-devoiement-militant-de-l-enseignement-et-de-la-recherche_6070816_3232.html.
 - 21 Kacem El Ghazzali, Ich kritisierte den politischen Islam und die Identitätspolitik. Und plötzlich galt ich als «rechts». Warum eigentlich? NZZ, 20 September 2019 at <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/islam-und-identitaetspolitik-kritik-ist-legitim-und-nicht-rechts-ld.1509319>.
 - 22 A point also made in different ways by Samuel Schirmbeck, «Man muss akzeptieren, dass Sakrales entsakralisiert wird» – die schärfsten und mutigsten Kritiker des politischen Islam finden sich im Magh-

- reb, NZZ, 24 February 2021 at <https://www.nzz.ch/meinung/die-schaerfsten-kritiker-des-politischen-islam-sitzen-im-maghreb-ld.1595309> and Lucien Scherrer, Die Extremisten-Versteher – wie Medien islamistische Denkmuster verbreiten, NZZ, 1 March 2021 at <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/terroristen-sind-opfer-und-kritische-muslime-extremisten-wie-medien-islamistische-denkmuster-foerdern-ld.1602120>.
- 23 See Sadik J Al-Azm, Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse, in *Is Islam Secularizable? Challenging political and Religious Taboos*, Vol 3 of *Secularism, Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Meaning of Islam*, Collected Essays on Politics and Religion, Berlin 2014. His *Crossing Borders: Orientalism, Islamism and Postmodernism* in Vol 4 (Occidentalism, Conspiracy and Taboo) of the same series is also highly germane to the issues discussed here.
- 24 For example in Bassam Tibi, *Islam's Predicament with Modernity: Religious Reform and Cultural Change*, Routledge 2009.
- 25 Aziz al 'Azme, *Islam and Modernities*, Verso, 2009.
- 26 Nick Cohen, *What's Left: How Liberals Lost their Way*, London 2007; Douglas Murray, *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam*, Bloomsbury, 2019.
- 27 In which I include varieties of “progressivism” and postmodernism, neither of which is necessarily “leftist” in traditional terms. Was Foucault, for example, a left-winger”? He had certainly been a member of the Communist Party in the 1950s. But in the end possibly not – more an anarchic and highly transgressive cultural critic, perhaps. There is a good discussion of all this by Geoff Schullenberger, *How We Forgot Foucault*, *American Affairs* Volume V, Number 2 (Summer 2021), 225–40 at <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2021/05/how-we-forgot-foucault/> and Theorycels in Trumpworld, *Outsider Theory*, 5 January 2021 at <https://outsidertheory.com/theorycels-in-trump-world/>. But for the sake of brevity – and because in general all those I include in the term share certain sources and conceptions – I use the term in various ways in this paper.
- 28 See Pierre-André Taguieff, *Aux sources de l'«islamo-gauchisme»*, *Libération*, 26 October 2020 at https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2020/10/26/aux-sources-de-l-islamo-gauchisme_1803530/: “L’expression ne fait qu’enregistrer un ensemble de phénomènes observables, qui autorisent à rapprocher gauchistes et islamistes : des alliances stratégiques, des convergences idéologiques, des ennemis communs, des visées révolutionnaires partagées, etc.”
- 29 As suggested in the notorious article by the SWP’s Chris Harman, *The Prophet and the Proletariat*, *International Socialism Journal* 64, Autumn 1994 at <http://www.marxists.de/religion/harman/index.htm>, “On some issues we will find ourselves on the same side as the Islamists against imperialism and the state. This was true, for instance, in many countries during the second Gulf War. It should be true in countries like France or Britain when it comes to combating racism.

- Where the Islamists are in opposition, our rule should be, “with the Islamists sometimes, with the state never”. There is a good discussion of the matter in Emmanuel Karagiannis & Clark McCauley, *The Emerging Red-Green Alliance: Where Political Islam Meets the Radical Left, Terrorism and Political Violence* 25:2, 167-82, 6 March 2013 at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09546553.2012.755815>.
- 30 See, for example, Alison Scott-Baumann, Prevent doesn’t stop students being radicalised. It just reinforces Islamophobia, *The Guardian*, 14 July 2020 at <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/jul/14/prevent-doesnt-stop-students-being-radicalised-it-just-reinforces-islamophobia> and her chapter on the UK in *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*; Vol 9. Leiden: Brill, 2018 at <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/25393/1/scott-baumann-united-kingdom-yearbook-of-muslims-in-europe.docx.pdf>, where she refers approvingly to the highly controversial advocacy groups MEND and, CAGE, which “is vilified by the Government and by the British press, so their trenchant critique of “pre-criminal behaviour” is presumably ignored or discounted by many”. See also UK Figures and Islamists Participate in International Conference on Islamophobia and the War on Terror, Policy Exchange, 27 April 2021 at <https://policyexchange.org.uk/uk-figures-and-islamists-participate-in-international-conference-on-islamophobia-and-the-war-on-terror/>.
- 31 See John Lichfield, Why Macron had to take on Islamism, *Unherd*, 11 March 2020 at <https://unherd.com/2021/03/macron-stuck-between-left-and-right-on-islamism/>.
- 32 There are different “Lefts”, of course: the old British Left, represented by the Labour Party of Keir Hardie, Atlee and Wilson, which emerged from the trades union movement, religious dissent and the traditions of popular resistance exemplified by the Chartists; Marxists, who take a rigorously materialist approach to social issues; and the European New Left which diverged from these two streams after 1945 and adopted a more theoretically polymorphous approach to social and political issues, privileging abstract analyses of power, race, imperialism and ideological hegemony. It is this latter tendency which matters most in the contemporary academy.
- 33 For good recent accounts of this highly complex phenomenon, see Ritchie Robertson, *The Enlightenment: The Pursuit of Happiness, 1680-1790*, Allen Lane 2020 and Jonathan I Israel, *Enlightenment Contested, Philosophy, Modernity and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752* and *The Enlightenment that failed: Ideas, Revolution and Democratic Defeat, 1748-1830*, OUP, 2006 and 2019 respectively. For the relationship of the Enlightenment to modern Islamist thought (not simply in Iran), see the excellent A Mirsepassi, *Political Islam, Iran and the Enlightenment*, CUP, 2011.
- 34 In all its many forms: see Helena Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism: From Ancient Rome to the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton

2019. The process is of course more complex than that described, with the origins of contemporary civic or republican liberal democracy traceable back to Roman and Germanic law, inflected by a political theology derived from the anti-imperial or anti-papal republicanism of the early Italian city states. See Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Volume 1, The Renaissance*, CUP 1998 and Harold J Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formulation of the Western Legal Tradition*, Harvard 1983.

- 35 In his 1784 article, *Beantwortung: Was ist Aufklärung?* (A Reply: What is Enlightenment?) – essentially a reply to a definitional challenge issued in a Berlin newspaper the previous year - translated in Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy* (trans and edited by Mary J Gregor), CUP 1999, 11ff. See also Vincenze Ferrone, *The Enlightenment: The History of an Idea*, Princeton 2017 available at <https://www.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.23943/princeton/9780691175768.001.0001/upso-9780691175768-chapter-015>, “In this passage Kant is then stressing that the Enlightenment was not a particular and unrepeatable historical era. The conditions for a free and public use of reason had already somehow occurred in the past and could occur again in the future. Neither was it a logical, historically determined thought category, since the forms of reason were always the same, and so were its potentialities and limitations. The Enlightenment was rather a specific condition in which reason was exercised. It was a historical condition that needed to be created, an extraordinary state of things and at the same time absolutely necessary to guarantee mankind’s progress towards an ideal future enlightened age. This suggestive representation opened the way to a perspective that is still today quite widespread. It is the view of the Enlightenment as above all cultural practice, political myth, progressive ideology, a perennial philosophy of man as master of his own destiny, a utopia to be realized in each latest “neo-Enlightenment,” and the emancipation of man through man. After all, this discussion was positioned as almost Kant’s concluding reflection in an extraordinary overall rethinking of the individual, of his autonomy, and of the limits of his knowledge. This is why his ideas have been so powerful, influential, and persistent in time. After the astounding successes of Galileo and Newton’s scientific revolution, and the resulting effects of emancipation on man’s life, metaphysics had become in his eyes something very different from what it was in the past, in line with what Diderot, Rousseau Filangieri and many others had insistently called for in their writings. In 1798 Kant wrote as a final synthesis, almost, of his entire work, the following clear statement: I have learned from the Critique of Pure Reason that philosophy is not a science of representations, concepts and Ideas, or a science of all the sciences, or anything else of this sort. It is rather a science of man, of his representations, thoughts and actions: it should present all the components of man both as he is and as he should be—that is, in

- terms both of his natural functions and of his relations of morality and freedom.” The question was interestingly revisited in 1984, when his enthusiasm had ebbed for the Iranian revolution as a spiritual response to the post-Enlightenment Age of Revolutions, by Michel Foucault, *Qu’est-ce que les Lumières?*/What is Enlightenment? in P Rabinow (ed), *The Foucault Reader*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1984, pp. 32–50 available also at <https://leap.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2017/01/Foucault-What-is-enlightenment.pdf>. Kant himself, of course, is seen as problematic these days, partly because of disobliging remarks he made about non-Europeans and partly because the whole field of international relations, of which his essay on Perpetual Peace is constitutive, has come to be seen as rooted in problematically racist ideas: see J K Gani, *The Erasure of Race: Cosmopolitanism and the Illusion of Kantian Hospitality*, 29 June 2017 at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829817714064> and Duncan Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race: Empire and the Utopian Destiny of Anglo-America*, Princeton 2021, Chapter 7.
- 36 See James Schmidt, *Inventing the Enlightenment: Anti-Jacobins, British Hegelians, and the “Oxford English Dictionary”*, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2003), pp. 421–443, University of Pennsylvania at https://www.jstor.org/stable/3654234?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3A383bc0fd3c08c01be6b318d534f20d37&seq=19#page_scan_tab_contents.
- 37 A major influence – along with Ibn Khaldun, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger – on that crucial figure, Edward Said: see Timothy Brennan, *Places of Mind: A Life of Edward Said*, Bloomsbury 2021, 73, 90, 123. The reviews of the book by Esmat Elhalaby, *The World of Edward Said*, *Boston Review*, 13 May 2021 at <http://bostonreview.net/philosophy-religion/esmat-elhalaby-world-edward-said> and Adam Schatz, *Palestinianism*, *LRB*, Vol. 43 No. 9 · 6 May 2021 at <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v43/n09/adam-shatz/palestinianism> help to map the field in question.
- 38 See Isaiah Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment*, Pimlico 2000 and Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism, *NYRB*, 27 September 1990 at <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1990/09/27/joseph-de-maistre-and-the-origins-of-fascism/> (first of a three-part article with further links) with the corrective views of Robertson 2020, 769ff. For the dominance of critical theory and its intellectual roots see François Cusset, *French Theory, How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze & Co transformed the intellectual life of the United States*, Minneapolis 2008. John Gray, *Deconstructing Jackie: How the French-Algerian philosopher Jacques Derrida became one of the most influential thinkers in the world*, *New Statesman*, 17 March 2021 at <https://www.newstatesman.com/an-event-perhaps-biography-jacques-derrida-review> defends Derrida and blames his followers instead: “The playful quality of Derrida’s writings has been widely neglected. From being a meditation on the slippages of language, deconstruction has

morphed into an antinomian cult. The postmodern intelligentsia furiously demolishes the Western traditions that made it possible. It never thinks of deconstructing itself.” For Memmi, the apostle of “lived experience” and “white privilege” see Adam Schatz, On Albert Memmi, LRB, Vol 42, No 16, 13 August 2020. There is a useful primer of his thought in Jonathan Judaken and Michael Lejman (eds), *The Albert Memmi Reader*, University of Nebraska Press, 2020.

- 39 In this I concur with Mirsepassi 2011, 2, “I propose that there is a profound influence of certain intellectual trends, originating in the West, that has contributed significantly to the formation and continuing development of political Islam as an anti-Western and counter-Enlightenment ideology..... Muslim intellectuals in general have come to know the West, modernity and democracy largely through the radical anti-Enlightenment ideas of German philosophy, as well as of certain French intellectuals”.
- 40 Interpreted by many Muslims as “tajdeed” – “renewal” – something given authority by a well-known and canonical Hadith. The idea was also influential for later reformers such as al-Banna, Mawdudi and Qutb: on the whole issue see Hartung 2013, 71ff.
- 41 For example, Walaa Quisay, *The Neo-Traditionalist Critique of Modernity and the Production of Political Quietism in Saud al Sirhan* (ed) *Political Quietism in Islam*, I.B. Tauris 2020.
- 42 See Zackery M Heern, *Usuli Shi’ism: the Emergence of an Islamic Reform Movement in Early Modern Iraq and Iran*, Department of History, University of Utah August 2011 at https://bahai-library.com/pdf/h/heern_usuli_shiism-hidden.pdf; Jonathan Brown, *Misquoting Muhammad, The Challenges and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet’s Legacy*, Oneworld Publications, 2014 and Michael Crawford, *Ibn ‘Abd Al-Wahhab*, Oneworld Publications 2014. Salvatore 42ff has a discussion with further references on the relationship of these movements, two at least of them “neo-Sufi”, to Islamic modernisation. Dabashi remarks that the movements of both ibn Abdul Wahhab and Seyyed Ali Mohammed Shirazi (the “Bab” of the Bahai) were “the two last gasps of medieval Islamic political thought” after which “the remainder of Islamic political thoughts and movements in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is categorically located on the sites of Muslim encounters with European colonialism”. “Medieval” and other indications of western periodicity are, of course, not entirely appropriate when applied to Islamic developments (as Dabashi himself has said elsewhere). But the point here is to suggest that the European Enlightenment was not a universal movement. Islamic reformers usually regarded themselves as engaged in “tajdeed” – renewal – with regard to an idealised Islamic past. After the colonial disruption, this past was set in opposition to a European present. Dabashi thinks we have now reached a post-Enlightenment, post-Western and post-Islamist age. I am not so sure.
- 43 Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, Cam-

bridge 1983 is the classic guide. Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, *Arabic Thought beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda*, CUP 2016 offers a corrective and takes the story further. It is supplemented by Alexander Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the European Enlightenment*, Harvard, 2018; Georges Corm, *Pensée et politique dans le Monde Arabe: Contextes Historiques et Problématiques, XIX-XXI Siècle*, Paris 2015 and Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss, *Arabic Thought Against the Authoritarian Age*, CUP 2018. It is worth noting that the apparent ending of the millennial threat to Christian Europe from the lands of Islam after the Treaty of Carlowitz in 1699 led to an explosion of interest in and a certain sympathy for the Muslim East (evidenced in various ways by Montesquieu, William Jones, Napoleon, Goethe, Byron, Delacroix, Carlyle, Burton, Edward Lane and so forth) which may have played a part in attracting reciprocal interest in European thought from educated Muslims.

- 44 Through for example the adoption of European constitutional models and the consequent downgrading of the status of the Ulema'. See Aaron Zelin, *From the Archduke to the Caliph: the Islamist Evolution that led to the Islamic State*, in *The First World War and its Aftermath*, T G Fraser (ed), Gingko Library 2015 at https://www.academia.edu/19349433/From_the_Archduke_to_the_Caliph_the_Islamist_evolution_that_led_to_The_Islamic_State_, The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Islamic Political Thought (multiple editors), Princeton 2013, 502ff and Joseph Schacht, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, OUP 1964, especially Chapter 15. For the way in which European – particularly French ideas – shaped the views of legal elites especially in Egypt (and therefore imported classically liberal ideas of personal liberty and so forth), see Sahar F Aziz, (De)Liberalizing Judicial Independence in Egypt, in *Egypt and the Contradictions of Liberalism: Illiberalism, Intelligentsia, and the Future of Egyptian Democracy* (ed. Dalia Fahmy, Daanish Faruqi) Oneworld Press 2016 at https://www.academia.edu/29014364/_De_Liberalizing_Judicial_Independence_in_Post_January_25th_Egypt?email_work_card=view-paper. David H. Warren, *Cleansing the Nation of the Dogs of Hell: Ali Juma'a's Nationalist Legal Reasoning in Support of the 2013 Egyptian Coup and its Bloody Aftermath*, *Int. J. Middle East Stud.* 49 (2017), 457–477, doi:10.1017/S0020743817000332 at https://www.academia.edu/34056783/Cleansing_the_Nation_of_the_Dogs_of_Hell_Ali_Jumas_Nationalist_Legal_Reasoning_in_Support_of_the_2013_Egyptian_Coup_and_its_Bloody_Aftermath_IJMES_49_3_457-77_2017?email_work_card=view-paper and <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-journal-of-middle-east-studies/article/cleansing-the-nation-of-the-dogs-of-hell-ali-jumas-nationalist-legal-reasoning-in-support-of-the-2013-egyptian-coup-and-its-bloody-aftermath/F2638FBB32AC4E325E05CDE31C5BAE3A> has some interesting thoughts on this process in the context of the Arab Spring in

Egypt. The basic point is one also made by Amal Ghazal and Larbi Sadiki, *ISIS: The Islamic State between Orientalism and the interiority of MENA's intellectuals*, Jadaliyya, 19 January 2016 at <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/32873/ISIS-The-%60Islamic-State%60-between-Orientalism-and-the-Interiority-of-MENA's-Intellectuals>.

- 45 Exemplified by the former Shaikh Al-Azhar, Abdul-Halim Mahmud, who could claim in 1983 that, "...reason failed in finding a mental criterion to measure truth and falsehood in the world of spirits. It also failed in inventing a decisive yardstick to distinguish between truth and falsehood in the transcendental realm. The method of Aristotle has failed, and so has the method of Descartes." See As'ad Abu Khalil, *The Incoherence of Islamic Fundamentalism: Arab Islamic Thought at the End of the 20th Century*, *Middle East Journal*, Vol 48, No 4 (Autumn 1994), 677-694 at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i399041> or <https://static.squarespace.com/static/4f334481cb12c1acad-c57623/5177e444e4b0244b5f673736/5177e4aae4b0244b5f67d514/1324404882095/17497979-AbuKhalil-Incoherence-of-Fundamentalism%20-%20Unknown.pdf>.
- 46 A connection in respect of certain movements in the Middle East and North Africa made by Maxime Rodinson in his famous – and prescient – series of articles in *Le Monde* in December 1978 (to be found at https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1978/12/06/i-ou-dieu-n-est-pas-mort_2984784_1819218.html) in reply to what he clearly saw as Foucault's Schwärmerei over the Khomeinist revolution in Iran: "Il est difficile de juger des tendances différentes qui doivent parcourir les cadres de cette organisation (sc the Muslim Brotherhood but his argument extends to all Islamists). Mais celle qui domine est certainement une sorte de fascisme archaïsant. Entendons la volonté d'établir un État autoritaire et totalitaire dont la police politique maintiendrait féroce l'ordre moral et social. Il imposerait en même temps la conformité aux normes de la tradition religieuse, interprétée dans le sens le plus conservateur, certains considérant comme primordial le renouveau de foi ainsi artificiellement obtenu, d'autres y voyant un supplément psychologique, un euphorisant bienvenu pour une réforme sociale rétrograde." As Afary and Anderson 2005, Chapter 4 point out, "Foucault in his utter and sometimes nihilistic rejection of modern Western forms of state power, seemed unable to grasp that an anti-Western, religiously based system of power could ... prove to be every bit as oppressive as Stalinism or fascist totalitarianism. Similar to fascism, this new state was in the process of combining many modernist features with an antimodernist ideology". Rodinson's later article, *Khomeyni et la primauté du spirituel*, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 19 February 1979 is equally elegant and equally scathing about the illusions not just of Foucault but a whole generation of radical Leftists. See Armando Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity*, Ithaca 1997 and Gudrun Krämer, *Gottes Staat als Republik: Reflexionen zeitgenössischer Muslime zu Islam, Menschenrechten*

und Demokratie, Baden-Baden, 1999, 15ff for the development of Islamism in opposition to but also inflected by European modernity, and the search for a modernist cultural authenticity of its own. As Salvatore 85 writes, “The three key authors in the autochthonous making of a “generic Islam” of reform, al-Afghani, ‘Abduh and Rida, were all active in restating motifs of the Enlightenment, Romanticism and Positivism.” For more specific relationships, see Francis Nicosia, *Nazi Germany and the Arab World*, CUP, 2015; Götz Nordbruch, *The Arab World and National Socialism: Some reflections on an ambiguous relationship*. OIS 1 (2012) - Rethinking Totalitarianism and its Arab Readings (the other papers in the collection are also of great interest); Martyn Frampton, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the West: a History of Enmity and Engagement*, Cambridge, Mass 2018, 22ff, 37 and 44. Omar Ashour, *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements*, Routledge, 2010 has helpful insights into the origins of the MB and its relationship to violence, including the influence in the 1920s and 1930s of European fascist movements on its development – as on that of the Ba’ath in Syria and Iraq and the Falange in Lebanon. Asser Khattab, *Swastikas in Damascus*, Newlines, March 2021 at <https://newlinesmag.com/essays/swastikas-in-damascus/> gives a personal account of the consequences. Hartung 2013, 49ff discusses the influence of various forms of fascism on Islamist and nationalist movements in late colonial South Asia. For contemporary echoes in Erdogan’s Turkey, see Rainer Hermann, *Erdogan und sein Mafiapate*, FAZ, 30 July 2016 at <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/erdogans-mafiapate-propagiert-ehre-blut-und-vaterland-14360368.html>.

- 47 Whose Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical (1861) had been translated into Arabic via French by the great reformist Shaikh Al-Azhar, Muhammad Abduh: on this and the wider question of the shared repertoire of enlightenment and counter-enlightenment ideas, see Aziz al Azmeh, *Islamist Revivalism and Western Ideologies* History Workshop Journal, Volume 32, Issue 1, AUTUMN 1991, Pages 44-53 at <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/32.1.44> and <https://academic.oup.com/hwj/article/32/1/44/717789> and *Islams and Modernities*, Verso 2009, 97ff, where he adds Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau to the list of influences.
- 48 See Jan-Peter Hartung, *A System of Life: Mawdudi and the Ideologisation of Islam*, OUP, 2013, 38ff and, Sir John Jenkins, *On Islamism*, Policy Exchange, November 2020 for further references.
- 49 Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, CUP, 1990, quoted in François Burgat, *Understanding Political islam*, 256. In other words, “The fragmentary force of Islamism was developed through the epistemic structures of modernity”: Quisay 2020.
- 50 See Khalil Al-Anani, *Inside the Muslim Brotherhood: Religion, Identity and Politics*, OUP, 2016, 50ff; Joas Wagemakers, *Making definitional sense of Islamism*, ORIENT II/2021; and Jenkins 2020 for more

references. As Hamid Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the Empire*, Routledge 2008, 37 remarks, “My thesis, simply put, is this: militant Islamism emerged from the early nineteenth century in direct and combative response to European colonialism, gradually changing a medieval faith into a solitary site of ideological resistance to colonial modernity.” The European periodicity of “medieval” and “modernity” deserves more interrogation. And Dabashi conducts his ideological resistance from within the heart of the Empire at Columbia. But the point stands.

- 51 See Joel Wing, *A History of the Iraqi Communist Party: Interview with Univ of East Anglia's Johan Franzén*, *Musings on Iraq*, 15 July 2014 at <http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2014/07/a-history-of-iraqi-communist-party.html>, Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran*, New Brunswick 2008, 12ff, Juan R.I.Cole and Nikkie R.Keddie, *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, Yale 1986 and Hartung 2013, 44ff. For the relationship between communism and Islamist movements within the Shi'a community of Iraq see Yizhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, Princeton 2003, Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History and Collective identity in Modern Iraq*, Berkeley 2005 and Faleh A Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, Saqi 2003. For Iran see Baqer Moin, *Khomeini, Life of the Ayatollah*, I.B. Tauris 1999, Roy Mottahadeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, Oneworld 2000 and Iran: How a Marxist guerrilla band sparked a struggle in Siahkal, *Middle East Eye*, 8 February 2021 at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iran-siahkal-incident-anniversary-leftist-guerrilla-shah-history>. There is an illuminating brief account of the attraction of communism to devout Shi'a Muslims in a rapidly urbanising society by Quentin Müller and Sabrine Lakhram, *Comment le communisme a façonné le chiisme politique irakien*, *OrientXXI*, 25 April 2019 at <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/comment-le-communisme-a-faconne-le-chiisme-politique-irakien,3043>, “Pour convaincre cette communauté paysanne largement analphabète, les militants mettent en avant les similarités idéologiques, mais aussi la ressemblance entre les mots « communiste » : shuyu'i et « chiite » : shi'i . Ils utilisent également la figure de Hussein¹ pour illustrer la lutte contre l'injustice. Si le communisme s'implanta beaucoup plus dans les sociétés chiïtes que dans les sociétés sunnites, c'est aussi à cause de la présence d'une structure pyramidale. L'organisation cléricale chiïte à la tête de laquelle se trouve un marja ayant lui-même ses propres wukala (agents) dans différentes régions fait écho au système politique communiste, construit autour d'un réseau de cellules et de sections.....C'est dans cette optique que Mohamed Bakr Al-Sadr rédige deux des ouvrages majeurs : *Iqtisadouna* (Notre économie) et *Falsafatouna* (Notre philosophie). Ces deux études visent à mettre en évidence la supériorité de la pensée islamique en matière d'économie et de philosophie sur la pensée matérialiste. C'est la première fois qu'un clerc présente une

vision chiite de la justice sociale et de la philosophie en des termes et avec un langage familier aux lecteurs de Karl Marx. La connaissance de Mohamed Bakr Al-Sadr de la pensée des philosophes occidentaux ainsi que des courants de philosophie occidentale comme le rationalisme ou l'empirisme était chose peu commune dans le milieu clérical chiite." It may be no accident that one of Sayyid Qutb's first books, written on the cusp of his transition from conservative critic to Islamist ideologue, was *Social Justice In Islam* (Al-'Adalat al-'Ijtima'iyyah fil-Islam, Dar al-Shuruq, Cairo, 2014). Abu Zayd 2018, 149ff certainly sees in this the influence of what he calls (again following Hassan Hanafi), "al Yasar al Islami" ("the Islamic Left"). Ghannouchi 2011, 29 ff describes the predominance of Communist, Ba'athi and Arab Nationalist views among Arab students in Paris in the late 1960s and goes on to set the Islamic concern with "social justice" in direct contrast to that of the materialist Left in the West.

- 52 Translated by Maryam Loutfi, Edinburgh University Press 2012, with a useful introduction.
- 53 *Myth and Reality in the Contemporary Islamist Movement* (tr Ibrahim M Abu-Rabi') Pluto Press 2005. He was a scathing critic of Hassan Hanafi and other sympathisers with Islamism from the religious right and the left. Interestingly in this he was at one with the Salafi scholar, Abu Qatada, who accused Hanafi of "zandaqah" (heresy) for his attempts to straddle different traditions. This indicates the continuing difficulty for Islamists and others of finding the right positioning. See Peter Nesser, Abū Qatāda and Palestine, *Die Welt des Islams* 53 (2013) 416-448 at https://www.academia.edu/5384072/Abu_Qatada_and_Palestine?email_work_card=view-paper.
- 54 From the Arabic "turath" or "heritage".
- 55 Translated by Jonathan Wright, Yale, 2018, again with a useful introduction. As its title suggests, the book is itself a critique of Islamist discourse which seeks to reveal its sources and pathologies. Under the tutelage of his teacher, Hassan Hanafi, perhaps the originator of the concept of "Istighrab"/"Occidentalism", Abu Zayd was influenced by a roll call of significant modern European thinkers also important for semiology (on which he wrote a book), hermeneutics and critical theory such as Dilthey, Saussure, Bergson, Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss, Heidegger, Gadamer, Ricoeur, Foucault and Barthes.
- 56 Quisay 2020
- 57 For example, Mohammed Arkoun, *Islam: To Reform or to Subvert?* Saqi Books 2006. There is a good account of his thought in Ursula Günther, Mohammed Arkoun: Towards a radical rethinking of Islamic thought in Suha Taji-Farouk (ed), *Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur'an*, OUP 2006.
- 58 See Salvatore 88ff and Navid Kermani, *From Revelation to Interpretation: Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd and the Literary Study of the Qur'an* in Taji-Farouki 2004. On Shabestari see Farzin Vahdat, *Post-revolutionary Islamic modernity in Iran: the intersubjective hermeneutics*

of Mohamad Mojtahed Shabestari in Taji-Farouki 2004 and Ori Goldberg, *Shi'i Theology in Iran: The Challenge of Religious Experience*, Routledge 2012. He studied in Germany and was influenced by his study of Protestant theology and hermeneutics from Kant through Dilthey and Karl Barth to Gadamer: see Note 131 below for more references.

- 59 See previous note and also for example Mitchell 1969, 43ff. Raziq, Abu Zayd, Arkoun and Suroush were all at various points persecuted for their beliefs. Hanafi has been accused of apostasy. There were moments when class interests made unified action possible – as in parts of the Gulf during the constitutional crises of the 1930s and among industrial workers in Iran, Bahrain and Eastern Saudi Arabia in the 1950s. But these were generally eventually subsumed into sectarian conflict.
- 60 See al-Azmeh 2009, 97ff. The idea is itself associated with European Romanticism, of course, just as Islamist attacks on Christian and Judaic scripture rest on the achievements of Protestant Biblical Criticism in 19th century Europe. Romanticism took it from earlier traditions of European thought going as far back as St Augustine. Through Kierkegaard it became an essential part of the Existentialist repertoire. Then it becomes social media. The idea, of course, goes against another key principle of both modernism and postmodernism – familiar from Freud onwards – the irretrievably divided and indeed ultimately unavailable self. See Alexander Stern, *Authenticity is a sham*, Aeon, 27 April 2021 at <https://aeon.co/essays/a-history-of-authenticity-from-jesus-to-self-help-and-beyond> and Corey Robin, *Arendt and Roth: An Uncanny Convergence*, NYRB, 12 May 2021 at <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2021/05/12/arendt-roth-and-the-imperative-of-dissent/>. Yet another contradiction.
- 61 Roxanne Euben *The Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationality*, Princeton, 1999 is an excellent guide through this maze. In reference to the Iranian Revolution, Dabashi 2008, 5 notes, “The injured Self, as it was collectively created, is the most compelling force in the contemporary Iranian psyche: the hostile Other is the visceral denial of “The West”. More than anything else, it is this collective discontent against an imaginative construction called “The West” that deeply animated the revolutionary movement.” The desire for differentiation through adaptation is a point well made by a distinguished Turkish scholar of Islamic and Islamist thought in *Islam and Islamism in Turkey: A Conversation with İsmail Kara*, *The Maydan*, 24 October 2017 at <https://themaydan.com/2017/10/islam-islamism-turkey-conversation-ismail-kara/>. The emphasis on authenticity doubtless has its roots in Rousseau. When Foucault told his Iranian interlocutors in 1978 (Afary and Anderson 2005, Chapter 3) that capitalism was “the harshest, most dishonest oppressive society one could possibly imagine” or – on a limited acquaintance with either Islam or Iran – that Khomeini’s par-

ticular interpretation of Islam was the only authentic one, dismissing secularists, liberals, non-Khomeinist Islamists and ordinary Muslims with one patronising and (dare one say it?) orientalisng gesture, one hears the seductive voice of La Nouvelle Heloise. It is also romantic tosh.

- 62 Which often turned former secular radicals into Islamist sympathisers, a trajectory seen in Iraq since the rise of a distinctive Shi'a form of Islamism in the late 1950s (hence the common saying, "shi'i/shuyu'i", effectively implying that Shi'a means communist – the two words have the same root in Arabic) and in Egypt after 1967 (see Fawaz A Gerges, *Making the Arab World, Nasser, Qutb and the Clash that Shaped the Middle East*, Princeton 2018, 334ff). As the distinguished Syrian scholar, Sadik al 'Azm, put it, "Under the impact of the Iranian revolutionary process, a revisionist Arab line of political thought has surfaced. Its prominent protagonists are drawn, in the main, from the ranks of the left... Their central thesis may be summarized as follows: The national salvation so eagerly sought by the Arabs since the Napoleonic occupation of Egypt is to be found neither in secular nationalism (be it radical, conservative or liberal) nor in revolutionary communism, socialism or what have you, but in a return to the authenticity of what they call 'popular political Islam'": quoted in Gilbert Achcar, *Orientalism in reverse*, *Radical Philosophy* 151, Sep/Oct 2008 at <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/orientalism-in-reverse#fnref5>. See also Jens Hanssen, *Reading Hannah Arendt in the Middle East : Preliminary Observations on Totalitarianism, Revolution and Dissent*, *Orient-Institut Studies* 1 (2012) – *Rethinking Totalitarianism and its Arab Readings* at https://perspectivia.net/publikationen/orient-institut-studies/1-%202012/hanssen_hannah-arendt, Hanssen and Weiss 2018, Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea*, London 2016, 197ff, quoting the Saudi Salafi scholar, Salman al-Awdah. Al-Awdah wrote *As'ilat al thawra* ("Questions of the Revolution") in 2012 – drawing on a wide range of references, some of them western, in response to the Arab Spring: Rasheed 2013 discusses his "representative discourse in support of revolution....He defines revolution as building on the past, reform and reconstruction rather than destruction. It always starts peacefully but may later become militarized when confronted with oppression. Simply phrased, revolution is a fruit that "may ripen, dry prematurely or be belatedly harvested": for the complete text see *Asilat al-Thawra*, *Markaz Inma lil-Buhuth wa al-Dirasat*, Beirut 2012, and for further commentary Rasheed 2015 and Matthiessen 2015.
- 63 For example, *Nahwa al Nour* (Towards the Light), translated in Roxanne L Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, New Jersey, Princeton 2009.
- 64 There are good examples from Qutb and a range of other Islamist thinkers in Euben and Zaman 2009. See also John Calvert Sayyid *Qutb and the Origins of Radical islamism*, London 2010, 90ff, "It impressed Qutb that Carrel (see next note) so strongly indicted the "dehumanizing" impact of modern, materialistic culture. Instead of

liberating man. As the post-Enlightenment narrative claimed, he believed that Western modernity enmeshed people in spiritually numbing networks of control and discipline, and that rather than build caring communities, it cultivated attitudes of selfish individualism. Qutb regarded Carrel as a rare sort of Western thinker, one who understood that his civilization “depreciated humanity” by honouring that “machine” over the spirit and soul (al-nafs wa al-ruh).” In fact, Carrel’s views were not rare at all: this could be Nietzsche, Heidegger, Ortega y Gasset or Adorno speaking. There are highly influential accounts of the development of Islamist thought in opposition to European thought, particularly communism, socialism and liberalism, by a former Egyptian Minister of Awqaf (and teacher of Yusuf Al-Qaradawi), in Muhammad al Bahi, *al fikr al islami fil ’asr al hadith wa silatuhi bil isti’mar al gharbi*, (Islamic Thought in the Modern Age and its Relationship with Western Colonialism) and *al fikr al islami fil mujtama’ al mu’asir* (Islamic thought in Contemporary Society), Beirut 1975. Al Bahi rather predictably blames imperialism, colonialism and in particular western materialist philosophies for any deformations in Muslim societies. See https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/يحيى_عبد_الحق for a succinct biography.

- 65 In his tract, ‘Aqa’id (Doctrines/Dogmatics), published in 1949, he quotes Descartes, Newton, Herschel, Flammarion and Herbert Spencer in support of his proofs of God. He also seems to have come across François Guizot, Gustave le Bon, Oswald Spengler and Alexis Carrel – also a standard text for the French Front Nationale (Aziz al-Azmeh, *L’obscurantisme postmoderne et la question Musulmane*, Sindbad 2003, 23). See further Aziz al Azmeh, *Islam and Modernities*, Verso, 1993; Frampton 2018, 23 (with further references) and Brynjar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942*, Ithaca 1998, 76ff. Spengler, Alexis Carrel and Arnold Toynbee were cited by the Tunisian Islamist, Rashid al Ghannouchi, as key anti-western polemical sources for Islamists when he was studying in Syria in the 1960s: see Shaikh Rashid al Ghannouchi, *Min Tajribat Al Harakat al Islamiyyah fi Tunis* (From the Experience of the Islamic Movement in Tunis), Beirut 2011, 22f and the excerpts translated by John Calvert, *Islamism: A Documentary and Reference Guide*, Westport CT, 2008. For Ibn Khaldun see Frampton 2018, 24 and (especially for his later deployment) Jens Hanssen, *Reading Hannah Arendt in the Middle East : Preliminary Observations on Totalitarianism, Revolution and Dissent in Manfred Sing*, OIS 1 (2012) - Rethinking Totalitarianism and its Arab Readings at https://perspectivia.net/receive/ploneimport_mods_00012340;-jsessionid=2E1AD1A3B2955313ADDAF3E1F3F73E03. Shariati commended Carrel, Ionesco, Fanon, Sartre, Heidegger, Jaspers and others to his students and wrote admiringly about Freud and the Indian modernist, Muhammad Iqbal, who had been influenced by Nietzsche and Bergson, admired Mussolini and also sought to combine Islamic

- and western modes of thought (see Hartung 203, 54ff, Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad, Militancy, Morality, Modernity*, London 2005, 123ff and Rahnema 1998, 64f and 161 f). The title of the book of his famous course of lectures in 1972 was *Islamshenasi/Islamology* - thus aligning it with those landmarks of deconstruction, Derrida's *Grammatology* and Todorov's *Narratology*.
- 66 On whom see Hartung 2013, 193 ff and Jan-Peter Hartung, *Viele Wege und ein Ziel: Leben und Werke von Sayyid Abu'l-Hasan Ali-al-Hasani Nadwi*, Würzburg 2004. Nadwi was primarily responsible for the translation of Mawdudi's works into Arabic and then their dissemination in Egypt. He knew Qutb personally.
- 67 The former adapting a Qur'anic term to stigmatise all of contemporary states and societies as "jahiliyy" - that is sinfully resistant to divine truth; the latter referring to the absolute "sovereignty" of God. On all of which see Calvert 2010, Hartung 2013 and Abu Zayd 2006. Abu Khalil 1994 has a brief but pungent discussion of the way in which these ideas arose out of misreading of the classical sources. The concept of *Hakimiyyah* finds an echo in Carl Schmitt's political theology where he "affirms sovereignty as the place of the extreme decision...in Schmitt, the sovereign is identified with God and occupies a position in the state exactly analogous to that attributed to the God of the Cartesian system": (Agamben 2005, Chapter 4: for the reference see Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie*, Berlin, 2015, Chapter 3). Cavagnis 2012/3 has some very interesting remarks on the connection between Schmitt's theological conception of sovereignty and Foucault's glimpse of "political spirituality" in the Iranian revolutionary moment.
- 68 For a detailed account of how this happened, see Hartung 2013. Sean Oliver-Dee, *Religion and Identity: Divided loyalties? Theos*, 2009 at <https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/cmsfiles/archive/files/Reports/TheosFaithandIdentity.pdf> is a highly interesting, valiant but in my view ultimately flawed attempt to invoke other South Asian Muslim thinkers in support of a liberal solution to divided religious loyalties inside the western state.
- 69 On all of which Dabashi 2008 is important.
- 70 See Ali Ansari, *Iran, Islam and Democracy: The Politics of Managing Change*, Chatham House 2019, 112 ff; M Boroujerdi, *The Encounter of Post-Revolutionary Thought in Iran with Hegel, Heidegger and Popper* in S Mardin (ed) *Cultural Transitions in the Middle East*, Leiden, 1994; Mottahadeh 2000; Mirsepassi 2011, Chapter 4; Dabashi 2008, 299ff and Laura Secor, *Children of Paradise: The Struggle for the Soul of Iran*, Riverhead, 2016. On the Sunni position see Abu Khalil 1994, Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, University of Chicago, 1982 187ff and more generally, Lahouari Addi, *La Crise du Discours Religieux Musulman*, Louvain, 2019. A Sunni exception that perhaps proves the rule is Rashid al-Ghannouchi, who became familiar with Marx, Durkheim, Darwin, Freud, Existentialism and Struc-

turalism during his time as a student in Paris and then a philosophy teacher in Tunisia in the late 1960s and early 1970s: Ghannouchi 2011 37ff. He claims the curriculum was designed to inculcate hostility to religion, including Islam, and that this spurred him to reject philosophy in favour of an Islamised approach to education. He adds that the Islamist movement in Tunisia, thanks partly to his own efforts, was eventually able to absorb what was valuable in western thought while remaining true to its divine mission. Since he also recommended (Abu Khalil 1994, 688f) that Islamic schools should teach Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb and his brother Muhammad instead of the great Islamic rationalists – including the Mu'tazaliyyah, al-Ghazali, Ibn Rushd and the Ash'ariyyah – that may need to be taken with a pinch of salt. A more recent example – though with a rather narrower range of references – is Salman al-Awdah, on whom see Madawi al Rasheed, *Muted Modernists: The Struggle over Divine Politics in Saudi Arabia*, London 2015, 75ff. Both al-Awdah and Ghannouchi, of course, are Islamists: the former's greater receptivity to deploying western discourse in favour of "liberty" and "revolution" (rather than just as examples of what is wrong with the West) may be opportunist. Or it may suggest the possibility of a more constructive engagement.

- 71 On both of whom see Mottahadeh 2000; Ali Rahnema, *Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shariati*. I.B.Tauris, 1998; and Dabashi 2008.
- 72 Who – like Shariati – famously supported the FLN during the long conflict with France between 1945 and 1962. Sartre seems to have been an initial intermediary between him and Shariati, with whom he later corresponded. Shariati published a translation of Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre* as *Mostazafin-e Zamin* in the early 1960s. "Mostazafin" then became a watchword for the Khomeinist revolution. See Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*, University of California Press 1993. 47ff and Rahnema 1998, 117ff. The Iranian-American theorist and academic, Hamid Dabashi, author of *Theology of Discontent*, New Brunswick 2008, has also adapted the themes of Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* in his *Brown Skin, White Masks*, London 2011.
- 73 The intensely militarist German WW1 officer, author of one of the most remarkable accounts of combat ever written – *Stahlgewitter/Hail of Steel* – and later convinced and then disillusioned Nazi: he was a friend and admirer of Heidegger.
- 74 Through the "French Heideggerian scholar of Islam", Henry Corbin, who knew and influenced a variety of Shi'a religious scholars in Iran, some of whom subsequently became shapers or leaders of the Islamic Republic. See Mirsepassi 2011; Ali Mirsepassi, *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid* (The Global Middle East Book 1), CUP 2017; Ali Ansari, *The Politics of Nationalism in Modern Iran*, CUP, 2012, 187ff; Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of*

Nativism, Syracuse University Press, 1996; Farhang Rajaee, *Islamism and Modernism*, The Changing Discourse in Iran, University of Texas, 2010; Dabashi 2008, 300 and 315f; Hamid Dabashi, *The Last Muslim Intellectual*, Edinburgh, 2021 – who has some characteristically dense reflections on the relationship between Fardid’s “Heidegger” and the real thing; and Secor 2016, 74ff: “Fardid and his students took from Heidegger the view that science was merely a philosophy. According to the Iranian thinkers, it was a Western cosmology in competition with Islam. The world was primarily composed of either scientifically discoverable facts or Islamic truths: it could not be both, and so the verities of Islam must be acknowledged as primary and protected from the methods and assertions of science”. The Iranian nuclear and ballistic weapons programmes, of course, do not rely on the Qur’an. Interestingly enough, the great Lebanese philosopher, Charles Malik, studied with Heidegger at Freiburg in 1935. Malik, of course, was Christian. So perhaps it doesn’t count. Foucault read Corbin in preparation for his trips to Tehran in 1978: Cavagnis 2012/3

- 75 Ahmad’s polemical monograph with this title was published in 1962. For the whole context, see Boroujerdi 1996, Chapter 3; Mottahadeh 2000, Chapter 8; Afary and Anderson 2005, Chapter 2; and Dabashi 2008. Gharbzadegeh is, of course, our old Hegelian friend, “alienation” in Persian Islamicate disguise, just as Shariati’s emphasis on “man as the active political agent in charge of his destiny” (Dabashi 2008, 120) parallels Sartre’s view of existentialism. Dabashi 2008 identifies several other important precursors and enablers of the Revolution, including Morteza Mottahari, Seyyid Mahmud Taleqani, Muhammad Hossein Tabataba’i and Mehdi Bazargan, each of whom in their different ways, were driven by “that lunar apparition, that figment of his captured imagination, the seductive force, the self-destructive urge, unleashed into a hermetic solitude, that he and his cohorts so irresistibly called “The West”.”
- 76 Afary and Anderson 2005 are good on the relationship between specifically Shi’a and Persian often binary discourses of suffering and redemption and powerful currents in 20th century western thought. As Dabashi 2008, 6 remarks, “The constitutional build-up of “the Islamic Ideology” was a politically necessitated hybrid between innate Islamic (Shi’i) revolutionary dispositions and imported secular (left and liberal) ideologies. At the same time that “the Islamic Ideology” harshly condemned these secular ideologies, it borrowed heavily from their language and logic, their rhetoric and romance, to construct its own claim on political truth.”
- 77 Qaddafi admired both Guevara and Castro. In 1977. He invited the latter to speak at the inauguration of the Socialist People’s Libyan Arab Jamahiriyya. He named his personal yacht after the former: see Simon Rushton, From Muammar Qaddafi’s superyacht to world’s first high-speed zero-emission sailing boat, *The National*, 20 March 2021 at <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/europe/from-muam->

[mar-qaddafi-s-superyacht-to-world-s-first-high-speed-zero-emission-sailing-boat-1.1187495](#) and Alison Pargeter, *Libya: The Rise and Fall of Qaddafi*, New Haven 2012, Chapter 4.

- 78 In 1970 he proclaimed from Jordan – just before Black September – that “the Palestinian struggle is just a part of the general struggle all over the world against imperialism, related to Vietnam, to Laos, to Cuba, to South America” see Kaleem Hawa, *From Palestine to the World, the Militant Film of the PLO*, NYRB, 17 October 2020 at <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2020/10/17/from-palestine-to-the-world-the-militant-film-of-the-plo/>.
- 79 Described fully by J B Kelly, *Arabia, The Gulf and the West*, London 1980. Interestingly, it is the Shi’a Houthis – the militant North Yemeni Zaydi movement known more properly as Ansar Allah – who have now adopted Iran’s anti-imperialist discourse: see Nadwa Al-Dawsari, *The Houthis and the limits of diplomacy in Yemen*, MEI, 6 May 2021 at https://www.mei.edu/publications/houthis-and-limits-diplomacy-yemen#_ftnref5.
- 80 I adapt the term from al-Azmeh 2009, 111.
- 81 A point made by Abu Zayd 2006, 156f. The Revolution also coincided with the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, which, together with the work of Fanon and Aimé Césaire, continues – often far less subtly than Said may have intended – to shape Post-Colonial, Subaltern and Critical Race Studies in the western academy: see Salvatore 133ff (“The Crisis of Orientalism”). Said – who to the end remained Adorno-like in his commitment to western high culture – was highly sceptical of this development: see Adam Schatz, *Palestinianism*, LRB, March 2021. He also fell out over the book with old friends such as Sadik al ‘Azm, whom he bitterly called a “Khomeini of the Left” because of his excoriating critique of its central theses: Brennan 2021, Chapter 7. As Dabashi 2008, 75 says, “The mere juxtaposition of “Islam”, which could not be an “ideology” in its own sacred self-understanding, and “Ideology” which, by definition, is a postreligious proposition, “false” in its Marxist stipulation, belies the contradiction that is resolved only in admitting the troublesome fact that in the very terms and terminologies of their opposing “Westoxification”, Muslims become even more “Westoxicated”. This is a point entirely lost on those like Azeezah Kanji, “Islamism-Leftism” or Islamophobo-Leftism?, *Al Jazeera*, 2 April 2021 who claim, in response to criticism of “Islamism-Leftism”, that it actually heralds a “radically more equal and just” world. This is effectively to claim that in a world of ideologies, “Islam” in its reified – or “Westoxicated” – form holds the only non-ideological truth. Such a claim is, of course, a perfect example of the blindness of the ideological to the ideologies that shape their thinking. Intriguingly, behind the thought of Schopenhauer, Heidegger and Foucault lurks the ghost of “oriental forms of meditation” – notably but not exclusively, Hinduism and Buddhism: Afary and Anderson 2005 and Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and*

- Representation (ed and tr Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman and Christopher Janaway), CUP 2010, Vol 1, 381ff. This also maps onto certain forms of Sufi thought, which may explain part of the attraction for Islamists.
- 82 Exemplified by numerous sources, including Osama bin Laden's Letter to America, first published in English by The Observer, 24 November 2002 at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/24/theobserver> and more recently by Ayatollah Khamenei's statement on Revolution Day 2021 that, "...the Islamic Revolution in Iran followed the Prophet's path that started with ... the Prophet's selection by Allah for the guidance of people. It ...was against oppression, tyranny and arrogance...in support of the oppressed people of any faith or religion. It stood for the deprived and the downtrodden (people) from any nation, religion or faith. Under all circumstances, this Revolution invited the entire humanity to (follow) the straight path of Islam": Ayatollah Khamenei: Iran's presence in the region is political, Tehran Times, 12 March 2021 at <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/459038/Ayatollah-Khamenei-Iran-s-presence-in-the-region-is-political>. A classic example of the welcome given by sections of the European Left to Islamism – which they take at face value as reclaiming a lost authenticity – is the introduction to François Burgat and William Dowell, *The Islamic Movement in North Africa*, University of Texas Press, 1997. Burgat is now one of the most strident critics of French government policy towards Islamism and indeed of many of his fellow academics, whom he sees in various ways as anti-Islamic or simply wrong-headed. The book itself is a valuable compendium of Islamist thought, illustrating most of the themes explored in this paper.
- 83 See for example, Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, Basic Writings (ed David Farrell Krell), Routledge, 1978. George Steiner, *Heidegger*, London 1992 and Wolfram Eilenberger, *Time of the Magicians: The Invention of Modern thought 1919-1929*, Allen Lane 2020 are helpful general guides.
- 84 See Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Ein neu zu erkundender Kontinent*, NZZ, 5 December 2014 at <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/buecher/ein-neu-zu-erkundender-kontinent-1.18438930>.
- 85 Most famously Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Fischer Verlag, 1969 (first published in 1947).
- 86 For a flavour see, for example, Herbert Marcuse, *Some Social Implications of Modern Technology and On Science and Phenomenology*, *The Frankfurt School Reader* (eds Andrew Arata and Eike Gebhardt, New York 1993 and the essays and excerpts collected in Feenberg and Leiss 2007).
- 87 See Hartung 2013, 51ff for an excellent brief discussion of the construction and diffusion of these concepts.
- 88 A phrase adapted from Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, Frankfurt-am-Main 1951, 52f. Thomas Mann's *Betrachtungen eines Unpo-*

- litischen (Reflections of a Non-Political Man) written during WW1, carries the same burden and the same distinction between Zivilisation/Kultur: Mann and Adorno were, of course, close friends. See Mark Lilla, *The Writer Apart*, NYRB, 13 May 2021 at <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2021/05/13/thomas-mann-writer-apart/>.
- 89 Summed up succinctly by Adorno and Horkheimer 1969, 19, “Jeder Versuch, den Naturzwang zu brechen, indem Natur gebrochen wird, gerät nur um so tiefer in den Naturzwang hinein. So ist die Bahn der europäischen Zivilisation verlaufen.”
- 90 Ghannouchi 2011, 21ff describes well the contempt of Islamists in the 1960s for the West. Mahdi Chowdhury, *Haj as Metaphor*, Jadaliyya, 25 January 2021 at <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/42288/Haj-as-Metaphor>, with his emphasis on alienation, authenticity, being and the transcendence of death, makes Shariati sound exactly like an Iranian Heidegger. Ali Kassem, (Not) Reading Shariati in Beirut: The Erasure of Anti-Colonial Resistance and Social Theory, *Jadaliyya*, 9 July 2021 at <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/42931> is self-explanatory (down to the Derridean parenthesis). See too Ansari 2012, 186 (of Jalal Al-e Ahmad), “The views which he later sought to articulate may best be described as an angry third world-ism, drawing selectively on Franco-German philosophies of alienation, particularly in relation to the material and mechanical aspects of modernity, but for all that resolutely nationalistic in his protestations of grievance”
- 91 Euben 1999, Chapter 3, *The Islamic State*, where she suggests that Qutb draws on both Qur’anic and Marxist traditions in his discussions of social justice. His language at this stage of his career is often strikingly similar to that of Frantz Fanon: see Hartung 2013, 198.
- 92 For example, Sayyed Samsam al Din Ghavami, one of Khamenei’s favourite clerics has claimed that “the Western humanities produce only ‘terrorism and injustice to others’ and that ‘so much bloodshed and murder are products of the humanities.’ He grandly proclaims that ‘the West is about to fall and the future will be Iran’s again.’”: see Mehdi Khalaji, *Iran’s 2021 Presidential Vote and the Tightening of Regime Control*, The Washington Institute, November 2020 at <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/irans-2021-presidential-vote-and-tightening-regime-control>. The sentiment is common. The website of Critical Muslim Studies (for example) at <https://www.criticalmuslimstudies.co.uk/about-us/> reflects the same concern to provincialise the West that is central to post-colonial and subaltern studies (which nevertheless exist largely because of the western academy).
- 93 For example, (all references taken from *Die Gesammelte Schriften*, Kindle edition), *Der tolle Mensch*, Drittes Buch, 125 in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*; *Von der schenkenden Tugend*, *Die Reden Zarathustra’s* in *Also Sprach Zarathustra*; *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, Drittes Stück in *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*; *Götzendämmerung*; *Von der Menschen-Klugheit*, Zweiter Teil, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, „Und ihr Wei-

sen und Wissenden, ihr würdet vor dem Sonnenbrande der Weisheit flüchten, in dem der Übermensch mit Lust seine Nacktheit badet!“ Walter Benjamin, *Kapitalismus als Religion* (‘Capitalism as Religion’), *Gesammelte Werke* (Kindle edition), 4303ff picks up many of the same themes.

- 94 See Quisay 2020 for a discussion of state idolatry. For a representative example of the wider discourse from Austria see Anja Melzer, *Vollkommen schleierhaft*, *Oriol* 18 March 2017 at <https://www.torial.com/anja.melzer/portfolio/201526>. For an excellent recent example from Britain see <http://www.hizb.org.uk/media/press-releases/the-return-of-the-islamic-world-order-conference-concludes-with-a-message-of-hope-for-the-oppressed-and-a-call-to-work-earnestly-for-the-khilafah/>. There is also ample evidence in Imam Sheikh Dr Usama Hasan, David Toubé, Muna Khan, *Mainstreaming Islamism: Islamist Institutions and Civil Society Organisations*, Quilliam, September 2019 at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/836965/mainstreaming-islamism-islamist-institutions-and-civil-society-organisations.pdf.
- 95 See Note 67 above and Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, University of Chicago Press 2005. The famous opening sentence of Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie, Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität*, Berlin 2015 (first edition 1922) is: “Souverän ist, wer über den Ausnahmezustand entscheidet”. Schmitt’s conception of the political community, as one whose boundaries are defined by exclusion and whose enemies are fair game, comes out of a long tradition of German thought about *Gemeinschaft*, which has had a particular resonance for both nationalists and Islamists in the Arab world: see Nazih Ayubi, *Overstating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East*, I.B. Tauris, 1995, 16ff. As Dabashi 26 remarks, „As the supreme deification of the Muslim self-consciousness, „The West“ has come to constitute the ultimate „hostile Other“ against whose domineering terms modern Islam has a deep resentment. It is precisely in terms of resentment that Islam attends its modern history.“ The claim made by Joseph de Maistre, *Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions* (tr Jack Lively) Routledge 2017, 151 that „the fundamentals of written constitutions exist before all written laws“ is analogous to Schmitt’s claim – following Hobbes – that the creation of a political community based on law implies a preceding act of political will. In other words, where European thought locates an anthropogenic basis for civil society, Islamists find God.
- 96 A point and a comparison made directly by Khalaji 2020.
- 97 See for example, the selections from the *Prison Notebooks* concerning *Wars of Position* and *Manoeuvre* in David Forgacs, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, New York University Press 1988, 225ff; Herbert Marcuse, *The Individual and the Great Society and Repressive Tolerance* in Feenberg and Leiss 2007; Louis Althusser, “*Idéologie et ap-*

- pareils idéologiques d'État, (Notes pour une recherche)". La Pensée no 151, Juin 1970 available at http://classiques.uqac.ca/contemporains/althusser_louis/ideologie_et_AIE/ideologie_et_AIE.html. There is a good survey of these influences in Alexander Grau, Political Correctness: Selbstzerstörung des Liberalismus und der abendländischen Kultur? The Austrian Institute, 10 November 2020 at <https://austrian-institute.org/de/blog/political-correctness-selbstzerstörung-des-liberalismus-und-der-abendlaendischen-kultur/>.
- 98 René Guénon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, Sophia Perennis, Hillsdale NY, 2001; see also Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World, Traditionalism and the Secret History of the Twentieth Century*, OUP 2004. He had a particular influence among certain Shi'a, who have generally been more receptive to esoteric ideas than Sunnis.
- 99 And indeed Russian Guénonists like Alexander Dugin, whose Speech on the 40 anniversary of Iranian Revolution (2020, Karaj/Alborz) on his website at <http://www.4pt.su/en/content/speech-40-anniversary-iranian-revolution-2020-karajalborz> is a classic of the species.
- 100 A wonderfully representative example is Alain Gabon, Why the West seeks to vilify political Islam. Middle East Eye, 22 August 2020 at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/why-west-seeks-vilify-political-islam>. This was the precise context for Taguieff's coinage of the term "islamo-gauchisme", in the pro-Palestinian, liberation and anti-colonial struggles of the early 2000s, which brought together Leftists, pro-Palestinian groups and Islamists such as Hamas and Hizbullah, in the same way as the Stop the War Coalition did in the UK: see **Taguieff 2020** and **Léa Guedj, Ce que veut dire le terme "islamo-gauchisme" pour ceux qui l'emploient... et pour ceux qu'il vise, FranceInter, 23 October 2020** at <https://www.franceinter.fr/societe/ce-que-veut-dire-le-terme-islamo-gauchisme-pour-ceux-qui-l-emploient-et-pour-ceux-qu-il-vise>.
- 101 On whom see Didier Eribon, Michel Foucault, Harvard 1991; J G Merquior, Foucault, Fontana, 1991; Janet Afary and Kevin B Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, Chicago 2005 (among other things a useful collation and translation of many of the texts) and Salvatore 133ff.
- 102 He also wrote for *Le Monde* and *Le Nouvel Observateur*. Interestingly enough, among those who helped him prepare was Alain Finkelkraut.
- 103 See Eric Aeschimann, Michel Foucault, *l'Iran et le pouvoir du spirituel: l'entretien inédit de 1979*, *Le Nouvel Observateur* February 2018 at <https://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/idees/20180207.OBS1864/michel-foucault-l-iran-et-le-pouvoir-du-spirituel-l-entretien-inedit-de-1979.html>, "Sommé de se justifier, Foucault répond aux questions avec sa puissance habituelle, et ce qu'il dit est à la fois critiquable et saisissant. Critiquable, car la sous-estimation des risques d'une prise du pouvoir par les mollahs est manifeste et le philosophe se laisse emporter par son enthousiasme, comme cela lui était arrivé sur d'autres sujets. Mais saisissant, quand il exprime avec vigueur une conviction

qui au fond aura guidé toute son œuvre : face à la toute-puissance des pouvoirs, il faut commencer par écouter ceux qui font acte de résistance, de révolte, de dissidence.”

- 104 See Max Weber, *Charisma and Disenchantment, The Vocation Lectures* (ed Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon), NYRB, 2020. The theme was developed by Adorno and Horkheimer 1969, 9, “Das Programm der Aufklärung war die Entzauberung der Welt” (“the programme of the Enlightenment was the disenchantment of the world”). Quisay 2020 has an interesting discussion of the attempts by Sunni “neo-traditionalists” to re-enchant the world in a different way. Both trends are heavily inflected by Sufism. See also Karl-Heinz Ott, *Die Unvernunft der vernünftigen Welt*, NZZ, 5 August 2016 at <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/zeitgeschehen/karl-heinz-ott-ueber-entzauberung-die-unvernunft-der-vernueftigen-welt-ld.109166>, “Der radikale Islam bezieht – wie jeder politische Manichäismus – seine Faszination gerade daher, dass er die Welt von allem Bösen befreien will, sofort und mit allen Mitteln.”
- 105 One of Foucault’s most striking reports from Tehran was entitled *À Quoi Rêvent les Iraniens?* *Le Nouvel Observateur* 16 October 1978 at <https://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/idees/20180201.OBS1604/de-notre-envoye-special-a-teheran-voici-le-fameux-reportage-de-michel-foucault-pour-l-obs.html>. For the English text see Afary and Anderson 2005. One of his most notorious predictions in a separate article – “Le chef mythique de la révolte en Iran” – was, “Ce lien [à Khomeyni] tient sans doute à trois choses : Khomeyni n’est pas là : depuis quinze ans, il vit dans un exil dont lui-même ne veut revenir qu’une fois le chah parti ; Khomeyni ne dit rien, rien d’autre que non – au chah, au régime, à la dépendance ; enfin, Khomeyni n’est pas un homme politique : il n’y aura pas de parti de Khomeyni, il n’y aura pas de gouvernement de Khomeyni. Khomeyni est le point de fixation d’une volonté collective.” Julien Cavagnis, *Michel Foucault et le soulèvement iranien de 1978: retour sur la notion de « spiritualité politique »* *Cahiers Philosophiques* 2012/3 (no 130), 51-71 at <https://www.cairn.info/revue-cahiers-philosophiques1-2012-3-page-51.htm> seeks to excuse Foucault on the grounds that no one knew what Khomeini was like in 1978. And in fairness Dabashi 2008 also explains the revolutionary impulse as a form of “political theology”. But it is precisely a willingness to be seduced by theology and an ignorance of real power in action (ironically mapping the classic Weberian distinction between inner justifications and external coercion in the construction of legitimacy) that still hobbles the Left – and anarcho-philosophes like Foucault – in all their dealings with Islamism. Foucault may not have known what Khomeini wanted (even though he had met him at Neauphle-le-Château in late 1978): but Khomeini certainly did – and had written extensively about it in the decades leading up to the Revolution (chronicled by Dabashi 2008 in detail). A claim to be able to decode *The Order of Things* doesn’t

compensate for that imbalance of knowledge. It should be said that Foucault was not alone in being deceived: so was the Carter Administration (see Kathleen Teltsch, Ramsey Clark Meets Khomeini and Relays A Plea to Washington, The New York Times, 23 January 1979 at <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/01/23/archives/ramsey-clark-meets-khomeini-and-relays-a-plea-to-washington.html>). The then US Permanent Representative to the UN, Andrew Young, described Khomeini as “a sort of saint”. The US Ambassador in Tehran, Bill Sullivan, compared him to Gandhi. But Carter never claimed to see through the veil of language.

- 106 “Qu’est-ce que la spiritualité? C’est je crois cette pratique par laquelle l’homme est déplacé, transformé, bouleversé, jusqu’au renoncement à sa propre individualité, à sa propre position de sujet. C’est ne plus être sujet comme on l’a été jusqu’à présent, sujet par rapport à un pouvoir politique, mais sujet d’un savoir, sujet d’une expérience, sujet d’une croyance aussi “: Aeschmann 2018. Sadik al-Azm, Experience, or “Regime of Truth”? About Translation, Arabic and the Postmodern, Vol 4, 35ff of his Collected Essays on Islam and Politics, Berlin 2019 helpfully discusses Foucault’s “regime of truth”. There is a brave attempt to justify his position more broadly by Cavagnis 2012/3.
- 107 Michel Foucault, Inutile de se soulever? Le Monde, 11 May 1979 at https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1979/05/11/inutile-de-se-soulever_2778551_1819218.html. He wrote that it was necessary to be “«respectueux quand une singularité se soulève, intransigeant dès que le pouvoir enfreint l’universel»». As Marie-Jo Bonnet, Foucault en Iran : «Il ne voyait pas les femmes», Le Nouvel Observateur, 16 February 2018 at <https://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/idees/20180216.OBS2318/foucault-en-iran-il-ne-voyait-pas-les-femmes.html>, an eye-witness of the same events, has subsequently written, “N’avons-nous pas en Iran l’exemple éclatant d’un pouvoir qui enfreint l’universel sans que cela choque Michel Foucault? Et le dégrise. Car c’est fait. Le référendum des 30 et 31 mars a débouché sur la proclamation de la République islamique. Fini la liberté des femmes, cette liberté universelle une nouvelle fois écrasée par le pouvoir phallique au nom de l’esprit.” Exactly so.
- 108 As Afary and Anderson 2005, Chapter 3 write (of the pre-revolutionary period), “This led to the predominance of an anti-imperialist politics that saw the regime not as an indigenous growth, but as a creation of Western imperialism. In this period, secular nationalists and leftists argued that the Shah’s gender reforms had nothing to do with true equality and were instead an example of Western imperialist influence”.
- 109 For the profound inflection of political Islamism by the experience of modernity: see for example the contrasting but complementary commentaries of Ernest Gellner, Postmodernism, Reason and Religion, Routledge, 1992, Akbar S Ahmed, Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise, Routledge, 1992 and Devji 2005. Bryan

S Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism*, Routledge, 1994 is a salutary critique of Ahmed's apparent embrace of postmodernism – as long as it only focuses on deconstructing the “West”: as he writes (12), “His thesis fails ultimately because he wants, somewhat indirectly, to employ postmodernism to attack the traditional assumptions about Western supremacy and modernist rationality, but he does not fully face up to the critical implications of postmodernism for traditional Islam”. He also usefully critiques certain aspects of Gellner's analysis. The MB's radical scripturalism and advocacy of personal engagement with the basic corpus rather than taqlid - or reliance on traditional interpretative authority - can itself be seen as part of a wider modernist and now post-modernist reaction against tradition and the acculturation of religion in favour of a deculturated, globalised, fragmented and now reconstructed, authority – and interestingly perhaps has echoes in the postmodernist academic wars of the 1980s and 90s in KSA and elsewhere. See *Islam and Extremism: Looking Within*, *The Economist* 28 February 2015 at <http://www.economist.com/news/international/21645205-there-heated-debate-about-role-islam-jihadism-will-it-make> and Hisham Hellyer and Nathan Brown, *Authorities in Crisis: Sunni Islamic Institutions*, 17 June 2015 at <http://www.hahellyer.com/authorities-in-crisis-sunni-islamic-institutions-by-h-a-hellyer-nathan-j-brown/>. As Roy 2010, 191 remarks, “fundamentalism can also be the expression of modernity through deculturation” and 144 “Taken to extremes, this rejection of profane culture also turns into suspicion of religious knowledge itself”. See also Brown 2014, 4487f on the unmoored and decontextualised absolutism of jihadists in general, for example, “The basic lexical disconnect between modern native Arabic speakers and the ancient text of the Qur'an poses a serious challenge to the post-modernist school of Qur'anic interpretation, which subjects the text to the authority of the reader, the changing landscape of epistemological eras and discourse communities.... Abu Zayd had objected to Islamist like Sayyid Qutb dumping raw Qur'anic discourse onto the twentieth century, acting as if the Qur'an speaks for itself and directly to us, ignoring the chasm of language that separates us from seventh-century Arabia.” Gilles Kepel, *Away from Chaos, The Middle East and the Challenge to the West*, Columbia University Press, 2020, 98f makes an interesting connection between the move of Abu Mus'ab al-Suri away from the Leninist vanguard approach of Al-Qaeda to that of Jihad waged as “a system, not an organisation” (in his *Global Islamic Resistance Call*), paralleling Gilles Deleuze's theory of revolutionary rhizome. He argues that this idea was being popularized while al-Suri was studying in France during the 1980s.

- 110 See al-Azmeh 2009, 97ff, “... the predominant literate discourses in social and political life are local adaptations of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment traditions, such as Marxism, naturalism, liberalism and nationalism”.

- 111 On which Martin Heidegger, Letter on Humanism in Farrell Krell 1978 (written in 1946 in response to an essay by Sartre when the facts of the Holocaust were clear) speaks volumes.
- 112 At least of reason and morality: Kant's essay, *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf*/On Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Sketch, Kant 1999, 313ff is now stigmatised as Eurocentric and indeed racist: see for example JK Gani, The Erasure of Race: Cosmopolitanism and the Illusion of Kantian Hospitality. *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, 29 June 2017 at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829817714064>. The dominant mode in the social sciences is one of relativism and the rejection of the grand or meta-narratives characteristic of the high Enlightenment: see Turner 1994. Unless, of course, the meta-narrative in question is about the all-encompassing power of "whiteness" or "white supremacy": for a spectacular example (including the headline) see Jennifer Ho, Professor of Asian American Studies, University of Colorado Boulder, White supremacy is the root of all race-related violence in the US, *Yahoo News*, 8 April 2021 at <https://news.yahoo.com/white-supremacy-root-race-related-120244625.html?guccounter=1>.
- 113 A Foucauldian phrase, arising from a lecture series he delivered at the Collège de France in 1978 and 1979: see Jonathan Xavier Inda, *Anthropologies of the Modern: Foucault, Governmentality and Life Politics*, Blackwell 2005.
- 114 By which "Islamophobia" can be classed as a form of "racism", as the definition produced by the APPG on British Muslims in 2018 demonstrated. Both terms are seen as socially constructed, so the boundaries between them are permeable. This presumably lies behind the reaction of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) to the recent report by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities: see Benjamin Butterworth, Race report 'serves interests of people who want to deny racism problem', says Muslim Council of Britain, *iNews* 31 March 2021 at <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/race-report-serves-interests-people-who-deny-racism-problem-muslim-council-of-britain-938143>. The trope is common: see Suspicion, Discrimination and Surveillance: The impact of counter-terrorism law and policy on racialised groups at risk of racism in Europe, ENAR, 2021 at https://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/suspicion_discrimination_surveillance_report_2021.pdf
- 115 The literature on this is huge. Krämer 1999 is thorough. Gellner 1992 is acerbic. Devji 2005 is acute, for example 26f, "This (Islamic fundamentalism) had been part and parcel of Cold War politics and was concerned with the founding through revolution of an ideological state, fashioned in many respect on the communist model that was so popular in Africa and Asia following the Second World War.... communist ideas about the party as vanguard of the revolution, the state as an explicitly ideological institution meant to produce a utopian society, and the like, were central to the movement". Sheri Berman,

- Islamism, Revolution, and Civil Society. *Perspectives on Politics*, 1 (2), 257-272, APSA Vol 1/No 2, June 2003 at <http://carnegieendowment.org/pdf/files/berman.pdf> is excellent on the revolutionary purpose of the Islamist civil society project in the Middle East and North Africa. This is the same point made by Samuel Tadros (2), *Islamist vs. Islamist: The Theologico-Political Questions*, The Hudson Institute, 18 December 2014 at <https://www.hudson.org/research/10883-islamist-vs-islamist-the-theologico-political-questions>, “This criticism points to an inherent feature of the Brotherhood despite its claims to the contrary: its methodology is ultimately dependent on using state power to enforce its vision. Hence, despite the early stages indicating a bottom-up approach of focusing on the individual, the family and society, those stages are merely necessary to reach power.” Al-Banna and his successors stressed the “shumuliyyah” – totalising nature – of their version of Islam: see Calvert 2008, 31ff for a representative interview with the third Murshid, Omar al-Tilmasani.
- 116 Available at <http://www.senat.fr/rap/r19-595-1/r19-595-11.pdf>.
- 117 See Hasan, Toubé and Khan, 2020. An interesting light is shed on the situation in Switzerland by Elham Manea, *The case for supporting Macron’s stance on “Islamist separatism”*, SwissInfo, 24 November 2020 at <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/the-case-for-supporting-macron-s-stance-on-islamist-separatism-/46179236>.
- 118 Including the Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France (CCIF) accused by the Macron government of having helped foment a climate of incitement at the time of the Paty murder. The CCIF was subsequently dissolved and set up shop in Belgium as the Collectif contre l’islamophobie en Europe instead.
- 119 Le 10 novembre, à Paris, nous dirons STOP à l’islamophobie! *Libération*, 1 November 2020 at https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2019/11/01/le-10-novembre-a-paris-nous-dirons-stop-a-l-islamophobie_1760768/. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of La France Insoumise has an illuminating rant against “islamo-gauchisme” on his personal blog at <https://melenchon.fr/2020/12/07/de-quoi-la-lutte-contre-l-islamo-gauchisme-est-le-nom/>, where he makes the standard postmodern shift from reasoned criticism to a claim of resistance to structural “power”, “Une fois que la lâcheté et le chacun-pour-soi a ouvert le passage, les coups pleuvent sur tout ce qui de près ou de loin résiste au pouvoir et à ses agents.” He can also be found on YouTube comparing Macron’s France to Khamenei’s Iran at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPwZR2FU3nc>. Olivier Vial, *Universités: «l’islamogauchisme? Une réalité depuis 20 ans»*, *Le Figaro*, 18 February 2021 at <https://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/societe/universites-l-islamogauchisme-une-realite-depuis-20-ans-20210218> gives more detail about the history of this phenomenon in France.
- 120 See Notes 21 and 108 above.
- 121 Muslim Council of Britain, *The Impact of Prevent on Muslim Communities*, February 2016. <http://archive.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/>

[uploads/2016/12/MCB-CT-Briefing2.pdf](#)

- 122 Which was not, of course, the point of the self-critique of most western antinomian thinkers: they found fault in elements of western social and epistemological systems, not in the whole, a point well made by Al-Azmeh 2003, 24ff. And this self-critique was on the whole not designed to enable the reimagining of the Western Self in opposition to an Eastern Other, a process analysed with great subtlety in the case of “the Islamic ideology” (a deliberate echo of Marx) by Dabashi 2008, 485ff. In general, see Robert Woltering, *Occidentalisms in the Arab World*, I.B Tauris, 2011; Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalisms, The West in the Eyes of its Enemies*, Penguin, 2005; Julius Dijkstra and Alexander Lohse, ‘The West’ in Political Discourse Structures of Regimes and the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egyptian Transformation Process at https://www.academia.edu/34670966/_The_West_in_Political_Discourse_Structures_of_Regimes_and_the_Muslim_Brotherhood_in_the_Egyptian_Transformation_Process?email_work_card=view-paper. The discussion of Armando Salvatore, *Islam and the Political Discourse of Modernity*, Ithaca 1997, 67ff is theoretically dense but persuasive on the subject of the essentialising Islamist dialectic between the “West” and “Islam”. Classic examples of the trope can be found, for example, in Muhammad al Bahi, *Al fikr al islami al hadith wa silatuhu bil isti’mar al gharbi* (Modern Islamic Thought and its Link with Western Colonialism) and *Al Fikr al Islami wal mujtam’ al mu’asir: mushkilat al hukm wal tawjih* (Islamic Thought and Contemporary Society: Problems of Rule and Guidance), Beirut 1975. Euben and Zaman 2009 have many others in translation. For an example at the very heart of the “West” see Caroline Fourest, *Brother Tariq: The Doublespeak of Tariq Ramadan*, The Social Affairs Unit 2008, 228ff. Abrahamian and Ansari describe the situation from an Iranian perspective.
- 123 Walter Benjamin, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, IX. He echoes Tacitus, Agricola, Chapter 30, “ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant”, of course. There is no evidence that Tacitus believed in the Angel of History. He may have been a critic of certain emperors but, unlike Benjamin, was at the heart of the Roman establishment and unlikely to have wanted revolution. Interestingly Arkoun 2006, Chapter 1 echoes Benjamin’s description of the “Trümmerhaufen” (“piles of rubble”) the West leaves in its wake, “I have often observed that Western scholarship on Islamic studies, apart from its fragile results, has often left Muslims in a field of ruins, without caring about their intellectual responsibility for any damage caused.”
- 124 Rahnema 1998, 128-9. And indeed that Islam is more “rational” than Judaism or Christianity, thereby implicitly accepting a standard Enlightenment position and a cyclical account of history derived not just from Islamic historiography but also from Vico, Hegel, Comte and Condorcet: al-Azmeh 2009, 110. Robinson 1979 characteristically identified the syndrome some 42 years ago, “D’autres croyaient réel-

lement que les idées dégagées des synthèses socialistes, néo-marxistes ou libérales de l'Europe se trouvaient impliquées, fût-ce virtuellement et dans un langage spécifique qu'il fallait apprendre à décrypter, au cœur des fondements mêmes de l'Islam ou bien peut-être (variante spécifiquement iranienne) dans ceux de l'Islam chiite." If only more people had paid attention.

- 125 Whom Heidegger in particular admired (though – or perhaps because – they only exist in fragments from later testimonia) for their apparent emphasis on the unity of being and flux, which chimed with his reading of Hölderlin, Schlegel and Husserl. The former wrote in "Hyperion" of his desire «Eines zu sein mit Allem» – to be one with everything, a common Romantic sentiment no doubt but one which here holds a particular philosophical resonance. For reflections on Coleridge's synthesis of these ideas for a British and American audience see Philip Cheyne, Coleridge the Philosopher, Aeon, 19 April 2021 at <https://aeon.co/essays/the-spectacular-originality-of-coleridges-theory-of-ideas>.
- 126 Which is the whole point of French laïcité and the US constitutional prohibition on the establishment of religion. See Nicolas Cadène, French Secularism Isn't Illiberal, Foreign Policy, 7 April 2021 at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/07/french-secularism-isnt-il-liberal/> and Jean-Pierre Filiu, The Long and Troubled History of the French Republic and Islam, NewLines, 2 December 2020 at <https://newlinesmag.com/review/the-long-and-troubled-history-of-the-french-republic-and-islam/> (more sensible than its headline suggests). The special place of the Anglican Church in England and Wales and the Catholic Church in Austria or Italy is increasingly a matter of anthropology rather than politics.
- 127 Steiner 1992, 155
- 128 Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Der Zauberer, Vierter und Letzter Teil, Also Sprach Zarathustra, Gesammelte Schriften (Kindle edition), 272.
- 129 As He is for Karl Barth, for example, or for Salafists.
- 130 But only if they get to write the metatext. The culmination of such an endeavour can be found perhaps in Roland Barthes, S/Z, London 1975, where the actual short story he is deconstructing – Balzac's Sarrasine – is relegated to an appendix and only those "who like a good story" invited to read it first.
- 131 Norris 1992 and Devji 2005 are both good on this. See also Sayed Khatab, The Political Thought of Sayyid Qutb, Kindle Edition London 2006. Interestingly, the Shi'a schools have retained an interest in Greek, Mediaeval (including Mu'tazilite) and some western political science and philosophy: see the chapters on Ali Shariati and Khomeini in John Esposito and Emad El-Din Shahin (eds), The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics, ed Esposito, OUP 2013, 169ff, Dabashi 2008, 299ff and Mottahedeh 2000. And it is in Iran that a framing of democracy – and all that it implies in terms of rights – as compatible with Islamic teaching has emerged from the radical cri-

tiques of former Shariatists and Khomeinists: see Jan Kuhlmann, Warum Islam und Demokratie zusammen passen, Qantara 6 July 2012 at <http://de.qantara.de/content/interview-mit-mohammad-mojtahed-shabestari-warum-islam-und-demokratie-zusammen-passen> and Fatma Sagir, “Der Islam ist eine Religion, kein politisches Programm”, Qantara 30 July 2008 and Plädoyer für säkulare Hermeneutik, Qantara, 7 July 2008 (a two-part interview with Professor Mohammad Mojtahed Shahbestari, with Abdol Karim Soroush one of the most prominent Iranian critics of the misuses of Islam in the pursuit of power) at <http://de.qantara.de/inhalt/interview-mit-mohammad-mojtahed-shabestari-teil-1-der-islam-ist-eine-religion-kein> and <http://de.qantara.de/inhalt/interview-mit-mohammad-mojtahed-shabestari-teil-2-plaedoyer-fuer-saekulare-hermeneutik>; Katajun Amirpur, Die Geschichte einer Aneignung, Qantara, 11 August 2016 at <http://de.qantara.de/inhalt/islam-und-demokratie-im-iran-die-geschichte-einer-aneignung?nopaging=1> and Der Koran bedarf der Auslegung, Qantara, 29 November 2014 at <https://de.qantara.de/inhalt/islam-und-gewalt-der-koran-bedarf-der-auslegung>; Secor 2016 and the interesting interview by Fatma Sagir with Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari, “Der Islam ist eine Religion, kein politisches Programm”, Qantara, 30 July 2008 at <http://de.qantara.de/inhalt/interview-mit-mohammad-mojtahed-shabestari-teil-1-der-islam-ist-eine-religion-kein>.

- 132 Most notably, of course, John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (revised edition), Harvard 1999.
- 133 Associated particularly perhaps with Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue, University of Notre Dame 2007 (first published 1981), All this, of course, is designed to fill the hole created by the expulsion of God from the western tradition. There are parallels between western and Islamic thought – Schlegel’s Unity of Being (which shaped the thought of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Heidegger) finds an echo in Islamic mysticism, Kant’s Categories perhaps parallel the Islamic idea of fitra or ghariza (the innate human disposition to understand the world in certain ways). The Hidden Imam or the Mahdi can resemble Hegel’s Weltgeist in certain respects (Rahnema 190ff) and so forth. But the search for an unconditioned guarantor of our moral and ethical intuitions is probably doomed to fail. Which is why the Islamist claim to supply the deficiency with an inscrutable but omnipotent Deity is so attractive to many – or can equally be dismissed as a place-holder by those who prefer to focus on the material elements of a shared critique. “For Shari’ati, the inclusion of faith in God removed all the shortcomings of Sartre’s “materialist” existentialism” (Rahnema 1998 128). Sartre, of course, would probably not have seen this as a shortcoming.
- 134 Muslim Council of Britain, Defining Islamophobia: a Contemporary Understanding of how Expressions of Muslimness are Targeted, 2 March 2021. <https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/>

SINGLE-SPREAD-Report-020321_compressed.pdf <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/defining-islamophobia-comprehensive-report-amplifies-what-it-is-what-it-isnt-and-why-it-matters/>

- 135 A point explicitly made by Ghannouchi 2011, 38, in discussing the need for a reasoned rebuttal of the claims of western materialist philosophy in order “to purify souls and minds” of these foundational western concepts, and prepare them to receive “al wahi” (revelation) and “al nass al islami” (the Islamic text). He goes on to say that these are open to interpretation, thereby associating himself with Hassan Hanafi (for example) and distancing himself from what he calls “extremist Islamists” (islamiyyouna mutashaddidouna). But his rejection of Godless thought – and his explicit denial that a materialist sociology of religion is legitimate or even possible – remains striking. Dabashi 2008, 6ff remarks, “Alternatives to this theological language have only economic, social, cultural or, at best, ideological claims to truth. All these fade in light of a theological claim to having God at the top of your political agenda The psychological significance of an empirically based legitimacy is no match for a claim of political truth with God on its side. An ideology of legitimacy is no match for a theology of discontent. The theological choice between the Shah and the Ayatollah is self-evident.”
- 136 This and the following quotes are from Euben 1999, Conclusion: Cultural Syncretism and Multiple Modernities. This is not to deny that Islamists do not seek to relativise truth themselves. The decision to establish the International Institute of Islamic Thought after an international Muslim Brotherhood meeting in Yusuf Nada’s Lugano house in 1977, with a mission to Islamise knowledge, should be enough to demonstrate that they do. But Islamists would probably see this not so much as relativisation as normalisation.
- 137 So Adorno and Horkheimer, 1969, Zur Neuasgabe, “Nicht an allem, was in dem Buch gesagt ist, halten wir unverändert fest. Das wäre unvereinbar mit einer theorie, welche der Wahrheit einen Zeitkern zuspricht, anstatt sie als Unveränderliches der geschichtlichen Bewegung entgegenzusetzen” This evolved into a destabilisation of all meaning, exemplified by the well-known 1968 Tel Quel essay by Jacques Derrida, Plato’s Pharmacy, Disseminations (tr Barbara Johnson), University of Chicago Press 1981 and criticised as disruptive of public communication by John McWhorter, Words Have Lost Their Common Meaning, The Atlantic, 31 March 2021 at <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/03/nation-divided-language/618461/>. Combined with a focus on “Islam”, this is theorised at <https://www.criticalmuslimstudies.co.uk/manifesto/>: “Secondly, Critical Muslim Studies is informed by an ongoing (but not necessarily consummated) suspicion of positivism. Positivism here is to be understood to include all investigations that implicitly or explicitly hold on to the dream of producing a neutral, transparent, and predictive knowledge, more or less discreetly packaged in disciplinary categories or themat-

ics that are supposed to have an independent validity. The opening gambit of Critical Muslim Studies would ideally include a questioning of whether categories, concepts, and themes bequeathed to us for understanding Islam and its cognates are fit for purpose and adequate to current circumstances. Thus, for Critical Muslim Studies, there is no necessary comfort in having “the facts and data” (Volpi, 2010: 1-20), nor does the comfort come from wholesale rejection of these tools, but rather it requires a middle path in which the idea of a universally valid social science has to be demonstrated rather than simply assumed.”

138 Salvatore, 57.

139 Whom Foucault characteristically seems to have admired: Afary and Anderson 2005, Chapter 3.

140 All of which, of course, may be the point. As Afary and Anderson, 2005, Chapter 3 explain, “Foucault’s problem with the Islamist vision he had evoked ... was not centered on women’s rights or on the danger of a clerical authoritarianism. Instead the danger he saw lurking underneath the Iranian upheaval was that of a liberal democracy.” The folly continues. For an eloquent defence of liberal democracy see Leon Wieseltier, *The Radical Liberal*, White Rose Magazine, Issue 1, Spring 2021 at <https://whiterosemagazine.com/the-radical-liberal/>. And for an equally eloquent defence of Enlightenment epistemology see Samantha Jones, *How Will Decolonizing the Curriculum Help the Poor and Dispossessed?*, Quillette 10 April 2021 at <https://quillette.com/2021/04/10/how-will-decolonizing-the-curriculum-help-the-poor-and-dispossessed/>. It is always worthwhile in these contexts to recall David Hume’s famously wise remarks in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, “Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? ... I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness, and utterly deprived of the use of every member and faculty. Most fortunately it happens, that since Reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, Nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends. And when, after three or four hours’ amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther.” It is a great pity that no philosopher since Hume – and certainly no critical theorist – has been quite as sociable, kind, genial or humane.

141 Carl Schmitt, *The Theory of the Partisan*, (translated by G L Ulmen) New York 2007.

- 142 Displacing the class-based communalism of the old Left in the process. As Cusset 2008, 331 writes, “Every minority must confront the problems of organisation and enunciation in its attempt to form a group, however disparate. In this respect, difference represents the decisive challenge to community in everyday life, its historical transformations and its political aporias – this old concept of community whose bloody schisms were revealed in the twentieth century, along with its indispensable “principle of incompleteness.” In this version, micro-communities constitute themselves by resisting normatively dominant meaning: for Islamists normative meaning is something they uniquely possess. That is not a recipe for a happy union. It makes the Left’s blindness to the Islamist will-to-power – like Foucault’s in Tehran – even more puzzling.
- 143 *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (tr Frederick Lawrence), Cambridge MA 1987, Chapter 1.
- 144 There is a concise account of the roots of this reasoning by Herbert Marcuse, *A Note on Dialectic*, *The Essential Marcuse* (eds Andrew Feenberg and William Leiss), Boston 2007, 63ff; “It is consonant with the innermost efforts of Hegel’s thought if his own philosophy is “cancelled”, not by substituting for Reason some extra rational standards, but by driving Reason itself to recognise the extent to which it is still unreasonable, blind, the victim of unmastered forces”. The alienating force of instrumental reason, that is, needs to be challenged by (privileged) critical reason in pursuit of “freedom”. The order – or disorder – to which this ‘freedom’ may give rise is never defined, of course. For a spectacular example of where this can lead see Ole Waever and Barry Buzan, *Racism and responsibility – The critical limits of deep-fake methodology in security studies: A reply to Howell and Richter-Montpetit*, *Security Dialogue* 2020, Vol. 51(4) 386–394 at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0967010620916153>. Thomas Sowell, *Intellectuals and Race*, Basic Books, 2013 and *Intellectuals and Society*, Basic Books 2011 are helpful correctives.
- 145 And indeed on the fundamental principle that a shared understanding of the world is both achievable and desirable - all in the name of an allegedly principled resistance to Althusserian interpellation and the Foucauldian state. Remarkably, when this is pointed out or challenged, the progressive Left often respond defensively with sneers and claims that the other side is waging a “culture war”: for excellent recent examples see Marina Hyde, *The culture war is a box of matches the UK government can’t help playing with*, *The Guardian*, 2 April 2021 at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/02/culture-war-government-race-report>, Hisham Hellyer, *Europe’s identity crisis: Muslims are collateral damage in the continent’s culture wars*, *The Globe and Mail*, 27 March 2021 at <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-europes-identity-crisis-muslims-are-collateral-damage-in-the/> or Farid Hafez, *Are France and Austria Fighting a War on ‘Political Islam’ – or a War on Muslims?*,

Haaretz, 4 April 2021 at <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/.premium-are-france-and-austria-fighting-a-war-on-terror-or-a-war-on-muslims-1.9655265>. A more sophisticated version of this argument is that by Michael Brenes and Daniel Steinmetz-Jenkins, Legacies of Cold War Liberalism, Dissent Magazine, Winter 2021 at <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/legacies-of-cold-war-liberalism>, (to be read with the responses at <https://twitter.com/mbrenes1/status/1376572909511184390?s=11>). But they all have in common various forms of denial that ideology exists, matters or is something that shapes the thinking of the authors rather than their opponents – essentially a version of “move along – nothing to see”. Hafez actually describes himself as “a critical scholar analysing racism, speaking truth to power and representing the marginalised” at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/austria-raids-islamophobia-how-i-was-turned-terrorist-overnight>. That is the essential manifesto that derives its powers from Fanon and others. It should also be pointed out here that the real objection to Islamism – including the Muslim Brotherhood – is not (as for example, Nader Hashemi, Political Islam: A 40 Year Retrospective, Religions, 19 February 2021 at <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/12/2/130/htm> asserts – followed by Fareed Zakariya, Ten years later, Islamist terrorism isn’t the threat it used to be, The Washington Post 29 April, 2021) – that it leads to violence (though it often does) but that it is an ideology hostile to the very basis of the secular and liberal western state. Which helps explain why those who live under Islamist regimes characteristically want rid of them.

- 146 The famous Herr/Knecht or Master/Slave dichotomy In *Selbstständigkeit und Unselbstständigkeit des Selbstbewusstseins: Herrschaft und Knechtschaft, Phaenomenologie des Geistes*, Hamburg 1980, 12ff. This was a pivotal passage for Sartre and for de Beauvoir’s construction of a feminist theory of the “male gaze” and later for Fanon’s transfer of this idea to the construction of racial identity. It was adapted by Adorno and Horkheimer 1969 to describe the construction of subjectivity through an ideology of power (“Das Erwachen des Subjekts wird erkaufte durch die Anerkennung der Macht als des Prinzips aller Beziehungen”) and by Althusser 1970 in his analysis of “interpellation”. It underlies the attempt by Foucault 1984 to situate “Enlightenment” within a critique of subjectivity, discursively encoded power and technologies of domination and social discipline. He concludes, “Je ne sais s’il faut dire aujourd’hui que le travail critique implique encore la foi dans les Lumières; il nécessite, je pense, toujours le travail sur nos limites, c’est-à-dire un labeur patient qui donne forme à l’impatience de la liberté.” As always, it is entirely unclear what he thought this “liberty” would actually look like. Dabashi 2008, 24ff has some helpful thoughts on this. It might be added that in Islam the only correct foundation of subjectivity is in the relationship with and submission to God, in whose presence we are all slaves

(‘abeed). Again, the foundational contradiction goes unremarked.

147 Foucault was a classic example of this. Another excellent illustration is the tortured reasoning of Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler and Saba Mahmood, *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech*, *Townsend Papers in the Humanities*, 1 November 2009 at <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/84q9c6ft>. A sample: “Clearly, the Netherlands has seen its share of violent speech acts. The wound that killed the Dutch filmmaker, Theo van Gogh, was literally a message that was violently thrust into his body. And politicians across the political spectrum feel free to wage insulting discourse against Islam, as if Islam were a monolithic entity, as if their own murderous impulse belonged constitutively to the object of their hatred.” A message didn’t kill van Gogh: a man with a knife did so. Van Gogh is dead. Islam isn’t. This is where you end up when you textualise reality. Butler, of course, is an admirer of Foucault. Other examples are: Race report ‘serves interests of people who want to deny racism problem’, says Muslim Council of Britain at <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/race-report-serves-interests-people-who-deny-racism-problem-muslim-council-of-britain-938143>; and (on the veil) Agnès de Féo, *Derrière le Niqab*, Armand Colin 2020 and Rim-Sarah Alouane, *The Weaponisation of Laïcité*, Berkley Center, Georgetown University, 7 October 2020 at <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/the-weaponization-of-laicite#.X38vrY44eXo.twitter>. The sympathy many in the Labour Party feel for Hamas and Hizbullah and their support for Muslim Brotherhood figures such as Yusuf Al-Qaradawi fall into this category too. See Livingstone to Make London Beacon of Islam, *On Islam*, 19 March 2012 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20120403043938/http://www.onislam.net/english/news/europe/456294-livingstone-to-educate-londoners-on-islam.html> or the list of speakers advertised at http://web.archive.org/web/20070703080541/http://www.bminitiative.net/bmi/en/details_home.aspx?ID=103&table=sub. In the US, “.....Angela Davis, who spent the 1970s and 1980s trying to attach the black cause in America to the larger cause of the Soviet Union, came out with a book in 2016 called *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement*, trying to merge, on intersectionalist grounds, Black Lives Matter in Missouri to the Palestinian struggle against Israel”: Paul Berman, *The George Floyd Uprising*, *Liberties Journal*, Issue 2, Winter 2021 at <https://web.archive.org/web/20210330203807/https://libertiesjournal.com/showing/the-george-floyd-uprising/>. For an interesting piece from the Far Left criticising liberals and leftists in both France and the UK for tolerating the excesses of Islamists in the name of ‘anti-racism’ see Marieme Helie Lucas, *Stand and be counted*, *Workers Liberty*, 19 October 2020 at <https://www.workersliberty.org/story/2020-10-19/stand-and-be-counted>. All of this has recently led the Swiss-Tunisian journalist and liberal Muslim activist, Saïda Keller-Messahli,

to accuse the Left of being Islamism's "nützliche Idioten" ("useful idiots"). For German-speakers the whole interview with her conducted by the Editor-in-Chief of the NZZ is well worth watching: Yannick Nock, «Die Linken sind nützliche Idioten»: Islamkennerin kritisiert falsche Toleranz gegenüber Radikalen, NZZ, 24 April 2021 at https://www.nzz.ch/international/die-linken-sind-nuetzliche-idioten-islamkennerin-kritisiert-falsche-toleranz-gegenueber-radikalen-ld.1612935?kid=nl165_2021-4-25&ga=1&mktcid=165_2021-04-26&mktcid=nled.

148 See Stephan Malinowski, *Nazis and Nobles: The History of a Misalliance*, OUP 2020, 272ff for a good account of this psychopathology, with antisemitism functioning as an anti-Enlightenment cultural code, something anticipated by Marx and Arendt, among others.

149 See again the Critical Muslim Studies website at <https://www.criticalmuslimstudies.co.uk/manifesto/>. "Fourthly, there is an embrace of postcolonial and decolonial thinking. Decolonial thought calls for epistemic delinking as the means of delivering on the promise of critical theory in contexts where the dispossessed are not represented by the "translation of the proletariat" It is a project that places at its heart the "wretched of the Earth" and follows the consequences of this placement for an understanding of the emergence of the current world order and investigations of obstacles to its replacement. The insistence on understanding modernity and coloniality as unified phenomena is one of the key insights of decolonial thinking. Decolonial thought identifies the current world order as being the outcome of systematic and systemic (not absent-minded or accidental) imbrications between modernity and the colonial, and in doing so helps to historicize and denaturalize gendered and racialized rationalisations of cruelty and injustice. Its ambition for pluri-versal world history points to the contingency in the formation of the world and opens the way not only for a people without history to write their history but in the process to also have the potential to redefine the nature of the historical. Critical Muslim Studies, however, is not the application of decolonial theory or its mere enlargement, with the figure of the Muslim replacing the "wretched of the Earth" at the heart of its deliberations and formulations. Critical Muslim Studies is an engagement with some of the key concerns and responses of decolonial thinking, in particular the project of writing a new history of the world without the telos of the West." The irony is that this language would not be possible without Adorno, Sartre, Marcuse, Fanon, Memmi (who ended his life in a comfortable apartment in Le Marais, denouncing the ills of postcolonial governance), Foucault and Said. You can find the same phenomenon in The University of Edinburgh Alwaleed Centre, *The Study of Islam and Muslims in the shadow of the "War on Terror": Complexity, Reflexivity and Decolonising Methodologies* at <https://www.ed.ac.uk/literatures-languages-cultures/alwaleed/study-of-islam-and-muslims>.

- 150 And not in any Foucauldian way.
- 151 See Brian Z Tamanaha, *On The Rule of Law: History, Politics, Theory*, CUP 2004.
- 152 An extraordinary recent example of precisely this is the short YouTube film, of Tariq Ramadan, the grandson of Hassan al-Banna, currently facing multiple charges of rape in a French court, declaiming an 8 minute-long slam poem over an urban music setting (apparently a track from a forthcoming album, to be called *Traversées*), *Qu'est ce que vous croyez?*, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqgX-5CZG2Ps>. Ramadan finds time from his personal troubles to tell the “West” that it has stolen, cheated, lied and killed its way to global dominance. But this dominance is coming to an end as the oppressed of the earth – including all critical theorists, no doubt – rise in revolt against its arrogance. As Ramadan writes in what in another age would have been liner notes, “*Qu'est-ce que vous croyez? Je dédie ce premier texte mis en musique à toutes les femmes et à tous les hommes qui ont subi la colonisation à travers le monde. Aux migrants qui cherchent à échapper à la misère et qui finissent enfermés, criminalisés et dont des milliers meurent, noyés dans les eaux de la mer ou déshydratés dans les chaleurs du désert. À tous ceux qui se sont engagés à leurs côtés et qui refusent leur déshumanisation silencieuse. Aux femmes et aux hommes qui, au Sud comme au Nord, à l'Est comme à l'Ouest, se battent pour la justice, la dignité et l'égalité et espèrent, pour aujourd'hui et pour demain, des sociétés humaines et fraternelles, accueillant la diversité, et célébrant notre commune humanité. C'est ensemble que nous devons résister à ceux qui répandent l'exploitation, la guerre et la mort : telle est l'exigence de notre espérance d'unité et de paix.*” It's a bizarre mixture of Spengler, Adorno, Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri and Fanon. See also Stéphane Kovačs, *Le prédicateur Tariq Ramadan chante le «grand remplacement»*, *Le Figaro*, 7 April 2021 at <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/tariq-ramadan-chante-le-grand-remplacement-20210407>.
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